

Principles of Fighting in the Age of Nihilism

(Based on the Theory of Systems of Allegories)

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Acknowledgement

Problematic: Nihilism and the Meaning of Life

“What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism.*”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, the preface to *The Will to Power*¹, 1887)

René Descartes began his book *Meditations* with doubt. He hoped to extract a kind of certainty from this doubt. Today, however, what remains of Descartes is his doubt, as well as a residue of the achievement of his second meditation, that is, “I”, the modern subject. All of Descartes’s efforts to establish the foundations of truth in the fourth meditation, which rely on proving God’s existence in the third and fifth meditations, in order to reach the metaphysical foundations of physics in the fifth and sixth meditations, are today deemed dogmas that merely hold historical significance. Perhaps it was for this reason that more than two hundred years after Descartes’s failed attempt, Edmund Husserl at the Sorbonne University next to Descartes’s tomb, at the same time as acknowledging Descartes’s defeat, explicitly said that we should embark again upon a kind of revised Cartesian project. That lecture became known as “Cartesian meditations” and revived the Cartesian–Kantian project of founding the basis of truth on the subject. Husserl himself, however, suffered the same fate later and in “crisis” implicitly admitted this defeat.

¹ Nietzsche, F. (1968). *The will to power*. (W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, Trans., W. Kaufmann, Ed.). New York: Vintage. p. 3.

But today, almost 135 years after Nietzsche uttered the above quote, we live at the zenith of the very same situation Nietzsche predicted. Nihilism's acid carries such corrosion that it corrodes and destroys any steel conceptual principle that is put before it. Today, the crisis in the principles has escalated so greatly throughout the 2700-year history of Western philosophy that even the ancient Pyrrho or modern Hume could not dream of. There is no defensible possibility in sight for exiting this nihilism, neither at the theoretical level nor at the civilizational level. The emergence of fuzzy and many-valued logics and radical relativism, along with similar theories in physics (from Heisenberg's uncertainty principle onwards) and mathematics (from Gödel's incompleteness theorems onwards), are further manifestations of this as well. On the other hand, the problem has never been limited to the level of epistemology. All the pillars of culture and civilization, from politics and morality to science and religion, are affected by this fundamental collapse, and their astute believers have realized that they have been building their houses on unsteady ground. Today, every remark on the right and wrong moral action, right and wrong political action, and even right and wrong scientific statement is challenged, and relativism has become so widespread that even in the minds of the common people one witnesses the attractive but frightening claim that "there is no right or wrong at all". They forget that this phrase, despite its alluring appearance, may lead to the collapse of all the moral beliefs and all the socio-political possibilities and all the cultural and religious values of themselves as well as all the scientific and theoretical achievements, and despite its democratic appearance, politically it may lead to justification of tyranny and make any form of "criticism" and "fighting" impossible. Moreover, in the realm of politics, countries and societies such as "ours", which are suffering grave economic crises resulting from the collusion of imperialist agendas with internal maladministration, as well as a more stark degree of ideological tyranny in the

sphere of politics and lifestyle, for them of course nihilism is not the main problem yet: The problem of food, shelter, and freedom — albeit, freedom mainly in lifestyle — appear to be the most urgent problem. It is as if the people of these societies have not yet heard the “main news”, and therefore, they live in a kind of bliss because they presume that their ideal is clear (developed countries) and their enemy is known (the ruler and their cohorts). Even if, impossibly, all their hopes and dreams come true overnight, on the morrow of their “delusive freedom” they will finally see the main prison, a prison where they cannot find a jailer to project the blames on; or, to put it more precisely, a prisoner whose real jailers are themselves. Contrastingly, one might think that in societies where one finds addressed, at least on the surface, the issues of economic condition and the provision of minimums of biological living, such as food, clothing, housing, and healthcare, as well as a minimum of individual freedom at the level of freedom of expression and opinion and the tolerance of diverse lifestyles, the call of nihilism can be heard more clearly. But regarding “hearing the call of nihilism”, we know that even in these very societies, the cultural and economic instruments of distraction, from the absolute dominance of the “culture industry” in the intersubjective sphere and the spread of consumerism at the mass level, to the offering of pseudo-alternatives that induce passivity in the political and social realms, are so powerfully at work in generating mass desires and creating the illusion of satisfying them — and in reality, perpetually postponing the confrontation with the impossibility of such satisfaction — that the sound of nihilism’s dominance is, for the most part, drowned out by its own deafening loudness. Hearing nihilism in this sense, requires ears that have not gone so numb and deaf to such a loud sound. It is as if in “there” too, after experiencing the failure of the delusive revolutionary idealisms of the last century, now, in an unwritten and unspoken agreement, people have accepted nihilism as their unchanging destiny, and like an ear that

after hearing a continuous sound gets so used to this sound that it does not hear it, over time, intentionally or unintentionally, people have come to forget the main problem, they tend to not confront it, and endeavor to live a peaceful life with minimal tension: to minimize physical and mental pains, to increase lifespan, and finally, to die with a healthier body and a more numb mind. They may, perhaps on the day when, on one hand, their so-called civilized countries have turned into arenas of bloody battles and civil wars between the forces of emerging far-right extremism and religious fundamentalism (between the anti-immigrants and the “unassimilated” immigrants), and on the other hand, human civilization has collapsed due to greedy struggles over the limited resources necessary for survival and the satisfaction of desire, giving rise to a barbarism far more violent and overt, *perhaps* only then will they realize the opportunities they squandered today to build freeing and justified alternatives to the dominance of reductive and dogmatic identity politics — if they are even capable of such understanding at all. In such societies, that which is nowadays called political and cultural activity, even the most creative works of art, is mainly a kind of self-deluding display with the aim of forgetting the main problem, accepting the status quo, and avoiding sacrificing for and gambling on the formation of any other true alternatives for living and civilization. In this society, that is, the society after the death of God and the death of all the beyond human ideals, people now live, unbeknown to them, as if they have accepted that according to the law of desire, they can do nothing but naively try to reduce pain, and increase pleasure to the extent that it does not lead to suffering, busy themselves with all kinds of colorful narcotics and intriguing adventures and in this way, merely allow time to pass until death comes and washes away the whole story. The price of this relative satisfaction is sacrificing radical imagination, and wasting the most potent and ingenious human creative forces in order to make the ordinary course of events look more attractive. Today, the

previously creative slogans of “another world” do not even appear with a positive vision and, in the best-case scenario, are inserted in the election posters of the wardens of the very status quo, next to tired and hollow slogans such as “a world without war”, “a world full of peace and serenity”, or “a world without poverty”, without paying any mind to the roots and underlying layers that constitute war, poverty, and suffering. If we leave the domain of misleading and unrealizable slogans and step into the field of “critical actions that actually exist”, we see that the situation is far more pathetic: the idealistic activists who hoped to build a just and free world during the last century, either, head in the sand, still beat the drum for their uncritical and naive interpretations of fighting, revolution, and utopia, or, have mostly come to their senses and at the height of pragmatism, on the one hand, without engaging with the root of the issues, have merely been engaged in performative efforts to persuade leaders, in order to reduce the percentage of emission of such and such gas and stop the use of such and such fossil fuel on the planet, or, on the other hand, have turned to boisterous and insignificant efforts to preserve such and such animal species from extinction or ludicrous solutions such as distributing food in the poor areas of the planet or meager human rights activities regarding oppressed communities with the aim of reducing guilt and satisfying the colonial arrogance of the Western human again. These activities have become so similar to children’s games that the international community decided to entrust their leadership to children as well (from Greta Thunberg to Malala Yousafzai), provided, of course, that the children remain ever obedient (Greta Thunberg’s arrest after her criticism of Israel’s genocide in Gaza is evidence of this claim).

And this is not only so at the conventional-cultural and political level: almost the same mass stance takings can also be seen in the theoretical domain. That is, on the one hand, some philosophers, from their ivory towers, contemplate in such a manner as if they have never heard the call of nihilism,

and speak of their unshakable intellectual criterion and foundations and build colorful metaphysical mansions “about truth” with such faith and confidence as if it has not occurred to them even for a moment that their entire system of beliefs is up in the air. Due to the dominance of the polemical approach in the thoughts of the time, they are happy with the impression that, by disproving their opponents, they have obtained some proof for themselves, and they have forgotten that both themselves and their dogmatic opponents have equally weak foundations. On the other hand, in contrast to these hopeless positive scrambles, the victory is, indeed, for the anti-system, ravaging soldiers who can be considered the postmodern descendants of the skeptics. The collapse of any system leads to an increase in the power of the anti-systems whose only concern is showing the weak points and weak foundations of all other systems. This negation, however, is the true manifestation of nihilism in the domain of metaphysics: from Adorno’s “negative dialectic” to Derrida’s “deconstruction”. They have sharp eyes for the fraudulence of positive systems, and they have created a powerful tool to destroy these systems — or, more precisely, to demonstrate the illusoriness of these systems’ coherence and stability. This is where the main problem is witnessed: How can one justify a belief and give meaning to life in this atmosphere of dominance of negative nihilism? Today, the main problem is neither our criticisms of Adorno and Derrida and showing their obstruction or contradictions, nor trying to bypass or ignore nihilism, but in a word, that how can one, at the same time as accepting nihilism, at the same time as accepting the absolute destruction and collapse of all positive systems, think on an “idea” that survives the criticisms of the likes of Nietzsche, Adorno, or Derrida against any form of “meaning” and “system”. If we deem nihilism our main problem, any other discussion in this age is secondary and merely leads to an attempt at squandering time and possibilities: Life in a nihilistic age, is a life precisely with the purpose of wasting time with

the hope that death is inevitable and will soon brush aside the problem in the personal level. In this sense, perhaps the scariest notion for today's human is not death, but eternity. Before any attempt at explaining this positive "idea", it is necessary to declare from the very beginning that not only is there no guarantee to achieve it, but also, the writer of these lines, much more than the readers, is aware of his weakness and inability to present such an idea. Perhaps we should return again to this claim of Descartes's at the beginning of the second meditation — which, however, he himself probably did not believe in much — that in the face of failure ("if there is nothing else I can do"), instead of brushing aside the problem itself and replacing it with irrelevant or more attractive issues, one better admit failure, take full responsibility for it, and instead of projective blather, at least honorably keep silent. And if we are to pursue a conventional life, at least we should know that we don't even have the right to defend or attribute any value to either a part of it or its entirety. Today, at the peak of technological "advances!", in terms of epistemology-axiology-biology, we are living in the most meaningless and defenseless age of humanity; though not for such reasons as the age having been deviated from the path of truth and therefore one must return to the happy, hopeful, and original times of the past, but precisely because we have gained such insight that we no longer believe any of the previous stories that are supposed to make life meaningful (from religion to science, from political utopia to artistic creativity). In this sense, if an idea wishes to go beyond the status quo in a radical manner, it must first acknowledge all the achievements of nihilism, and even beyond that, it must appreciate and radicalize them and stand against all pre-nihilistic and nostalgic faiths and beliefs. On the one hand, due to technological advances aimed at reduction of toil, increase of pleasure, and expansion of comfort (which, ironically, is a secular effort to realize the promised paradise of Abrahamic religions on earth), and on the other hand, due to the collapse of all

political, moral, and religious ideals, humans, depending on what decision they make regarding their confrontation with nihilism, live in the happiest or the unhappiest era of their life.

In such circumstances, instead of affected and secretive ambiguity, one should resort to clarity of speech as much as possible. If a philosophy is to unfold a way, it must speak in a precise and clear manner and precisely show what we have and what we can do. The present text is an attempt in this direction. I will not waste my and the audience's time and energy to redescribe, in detail and in a negative manner, our (in a universal sense) current situation and define nihilism in an academic manner or critically show why all the existing foundations in all the philosophical and non-philosophical approaches are weak and unreliable. In this introduction, I have only alluded, as a brief outline, to the fact that why exiting this situation is the main problem, and how all other problems are attempts at brushing aside the main problem. But in the body of the book, I will elaborate in a positive manner on the conditions for the possibility of a positive plan for this issue. Clearly, if this work is to have any achievement, it will be its positive aspect, since merely showing the baselessness of all beliefs and the weakness of all foundations is not new news and has been repeated and announced in various forms since the second half of the 19th century. If someone has not heard this news yet, good for them (dark night and fear of waves and such barricading whirlpool, how could they know of us those carefree in beaches²)! And finally, if this intellectual structure is not to achieve a positive outcome and a defensible metaphysical anchor, then why disturb the peaceful slumber of the masses for an intellectual parade just to throw them into another nightmare? My entry into the discussion is entirely concrete. Instead of starting from metaphysical foundations (such as the meaning of existence and truth), we should start from the most mundane

² Hafez, sonnet 1

question that we face every day: “What should be done?” Or, on a more moral level, “what act is justified and what act is unjustified?” My problem is finding the answer to this question, on which the entirety of morality and politics is based. And indeed, it is clear that to answer this question, one should go to the philosophical roots and foundations and answer the same main question of anchor or criterion. But let us avoid falling into the illusion of “philosophical concern” from the very beginning. Philosophical or metaphysical concern is in itself meaningless. Such claims as: “others think about everyday matters, while ‘philosopher’ is to contemplate deep philosophical and abstract issues”, is in this sense, asinine. Regarding problematic, the philosopher must start precisely from here and now, from this very present circumstance, from this very doubt in such and such decision or failure to justify such and such political or moral action. Instead of pompous prattle about some kind of pure philosophical question, they must show whether and why philosophy itself is justified and what is the necessity of posing such and such philosophical question in life. Hence, this work, after some preliminaries, starts with the philosophical issue of criterion because without solving the issue of criterion, one cannot talk about an action being defensible or indefensible and as a result, one cannot express any prescriptive or even analytical statement in morality and politics. Regarding the nature of philosophy as well, we must take a critical stance at the very beginning: *Philosophia* (φιλοσοφία), according to its root, means “love of knowledge”. But only if we can go beyond the epidemic of these days, that is, the pastime of etymological wordplay, and seek the meaning of words not in the ancient cemeteries of Latin and Greek dictionaries, but in their living functions and possibilities in the concrete signification network, only then can we establish philosophy beyond both love and knowledge in a new position, and indeed put a new responsibility on its shoulders as well. Hegel took the first step when, in the fifth paragraph of the Preface to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he

expressed the hope that philosophy will be “able to give up the name of love of knowledge and become actual knowledge”. But with the discussions that will be presented in the epistemology chapter, I hope we will also take the second step, and that philosophy will not only abandon its romantic aspect, but also break free from the chains of science, so that it can finally take on the responsibility of creating and justifying foundations for confronting the main issue, namely, meaningful and justified living. I will show that the two myths which are dear to the hearts, that is, both love and science, in the conventional sense, are the two main obstacles on the path of making life meaningful in a justified manner, and as a result, they collusively reinforce the obstruction of philosophy itself and are the manifestation of nihilism. If we can pull philosophy out of the vortex of this prevalent duality of love and reason — though they are engaged in an ancient bogus war — and raise it to a degree of awareness beyond reason and a degree of commitment beyond love, then maybe it will finally have the possibility to provide a foundation for a new level of making meaningful and making valuable: not with the aim of love for knowledge (both love and knowledge in this sense, work against “awareness”), but with the aim of commitment to meaningful, justified living.

I have taken many political and moral stances before beginning the path that I have taken now. Even though I empathize emotionally with many of those stances now, at least for the time being (the prologue of the present book) I cannot defend any of them or slap together a justification for them. For this reason, all those stances are up in the air until further notice, and I have assumed the falsehood of them all (or, in the words of Al-Ghazali, I said to myself that “All thy pretended knowledge is nought but falsehood and fantasy”³). Therefore, I have firmly decided that if I cannot provide a justified

³ Al-Ghazali. (1909). *The confessions of Al Ghazzali*. (C. Field, Trans., L. Cranmer-Byng & S. A. Kapadia, Eds.). New York, NY: Vintage Books. p. 44.

criterion for issuing statements, I shall honorably keep silent and take no stance, at least in the public and intellectual sphere, similar to what I have done in the recent years before the publication of this book. This does not mean that the very abstinence from taking a stance is more defensible or better than taking a stance, rather, we will show that since every abstinence from stance taking is itself a type of stance taking, and every “non-action” is itself a type of action with all its consequences and effects, this silence is, rather than a condescending or clean-handed position, a silence due to desperation and acknowledgment of failure. Because unless we solve the criterion issue and exit the crisis of relativism, there will be no universal criterion for expressing any statement in the domain of politics and morality. It may occur to some of the audience that the situation is not that dire and, for example, without universal justified criterion too, some actions are at least better than others. For instance, killing millions of people is worse than killing fifty people, and that too is worse than killing one person, and that too is worse than slapping a child, and that too is worse than littering, and that too is worse than such and such action and so on. I must state clearly that at least for me this is not the case. Without a justified criterion (and, of course, we must speak of the meaning of “justified” in detail below), killing millions of people, perhaps even exterminating the entire human race in a fraction of a second is, morally, not different from walking down the street or helping the poor or making the people or God happy. This terrifying claim is my entryway into the byroad that this text provides. As a result, the “criterion problematic” can be deemed the point of departure, and this is reminiscent of the same rebellious allegory of Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, that in the age of nihilism, in the age of death of God, not only this or that institution, this or that power, this or that method of evaluation, but even the criterion itself too has collapsed: “Is there still any up or down?” So let us, at the very outset, again in a manner reminiscent of the Cartesian-Husserlian epoché, suspend all

achievements, theorems, and claims. I assume realism has collapsed epistemically and idealism is incapable of justifying itself and creating a universal criterion. We have found no way out of ourselves, and we cannot even confidently express any positive statement about “world in itself”. On the other hand, we have not been able to establish cognitive communication and exchange of information with any living intelligent being other than our own species — and even in this, one finds serious doubts — except in our own imposed frameworks. Whenever we were under the impression that we were communicating with a being other than ourselves (whether we consider this self as the universality of human, or as the individuality of person), we were probably just confiding in ourselves. In physics, in addition to the dominance of the uncertainty principle, the long-standing tradition of materialism itself has also been challenged, and physicists, after centuries of dogmatic claims about the originality and unquestionable supremacy of materialism, now acknowledge that “matter” in the conventional sense (including liquid, solid, gas, and even plasma and Bose-Einstein condensates) makes up less than five percent of the total mass-energy of the universe (see the *Planck 2013 Results Papers*), while the rest of the universe is unknown (dark matter and dark energy).

Beyond (or, more precisely, deeper than) uncertainty in physics, in mathematical logic (as the most certain form of cognition), a kind of divergent and pluralistic model-based thinking has come to prevail by virtue of Gödel’s incompleteness theorems, and this pluralism within modern logic itself, has given rise to the very nascent idea of “logical nihilism”. If such is the state of affairs in formerly certain knowledges such as mathematics and logic, then *a fortiori*, the certainty of claims in other fields of knowledge will be all the more called into question. In the domain of morality, there is no universal criterion left, and in the political field too, a kind of patched deteriorating democracy

(reduced to management of the masses) has become our only ideal for tolerating together the plurality of discourses that cannot dialogue. Because in the absence of this patchy fraudulent democracy based on minimal participation, this unsublatable plurality of soliloquies, precisely because of dialogue being prevented due to the plurality of criteria and principles and even grammars, to communicate with each other and share the resources of survival and desire, will have no tool other than violence and negation of the other. Best case scenario, we are faced with a plurality of epistemic or moral systems or partial systems (and for completely accidental, emotional, and geographical reasons, we have probably chosen one) that, although they appear to claim to dialogue with each other, due to the inability in explaining the necessary logic of dialogue based on completely heterogeneous principles, instead of dialogue, practically end up with a plurality of opposing monologues. These systems or partial systems (whether scientific, moral, or even religious) establish their arguments on diverse and different principles, and this very originality of difference, which is the main slogan of the postmodern era, has prevented the possibility of judgment and even mutual understanding. On the other hand, in order not to give in to this relativistic pluralism, a kind of head-in-snow dogmatism is spreading, that questions the very principle of dialogue, and instead of trying to find a way to confront the manys, it relies on its unreflective dogmatic assumptions, and even interprets the facts and the data based on them in such a manner that it has completely blocked the path of self-criticism and dialogue with the “other”.

Although the slogan of this world is relativism and pluralism, in practice it has led to nothing but the excessive spread of diverse dogmatisms rooted in identity (based on religion, race, ethnicity, language, and so on). Due to the demolition of principles, the crisis of making life meaningful has found that the easiest path is to rigidify principles and adopt dogmatism. Any kind of decisive

action in this world requires a level of foolishness, or at least ignorance regarding the fraudulence of the principles and the indefensibility of the outcomes, as if in this world they who are more active are those who understand less, and they who are more passionate are those who are less intelligent. Does a pluralist relativist skeptic sacrifice their life in the battlefield? Sacrifice for what? Sacrifice for what principle? Is anything even worth it? In such an age, the one who is victorious in the practical field is the one who can commit violence with minimal critical thinking: from Al-Qaeda and ISIS to NATO and neo-Nazism and Zionism and Trumpism and Putinism. But is there really anything left for us that is worth paying for greatly? Our hands are so empty that even the spread of violent and extreme fundamentalism can be seen as a product of an understandable attempt at making life meaningful in the age of meaninglessness. On the other hand, the situation is not that such and such suicide bomber of ISIS or such and such member of an American racist movement acts because of their strong faith, but rather, on the contrary, it is as if they act because they wish to prove their faith to themselves and others and save themselves from the meaninglessness. This dogmatic extremism has found no practical alternative against itself except the avarice of the masses to consume: and perhaps from this perspective, the violent suicide bombing of a radical fundamentalist, at least for themselves, seems far more meaningful than the act of avariciously wandering between shopping malls and Instagram pages.

Despite the seriousness of all the various debates in the economic, cultural, religious, moral, and even political spheres about the ways out of this erosive duality, as well as all the efforts for building a “third way” and alternatives to make a new type of morality, religion, and politics possible, inevitably we must admit that the main problem is not in the domains of morality, politics, religion, and culture, but in the principles that make life meaningful. It is clear that these principles are not separate from religion,

culture, politics, morality, etc., but all these domains inevitably return, in their most problematic issues, to the discussion of the principles, and this is the level that has been deliberately marginalized today. The precondition for any defense of political, moral, religious, or other kinds of action is “judgment”. And when the criteria and foundations are unreliable, the more decisively an individual or a society wishes to issue a verdict, inevitably the more they must, neglect, or deliberately overlook, the crisis present at the realm of foundations.

With this in mind, can one not now claim that all efforts to “give meaning” to life, as well as all measures for a “universal judgment” (whether in the realm of theory or in the realm of practice), have failed? After reading this introduction, if a reader finds it too pessimistic or doubts the dominance of nihilism in our era and the crisis reigning over any form of criterion and foundation, instead of reading this book they should start with works that explain this crisis clearly. My purpose in this writing is not to repeat what has already been said. If someone has not obtained such insight, even the very reading of this work is meaningless for them. This work is an attempt to find or create a justified meaning for life (in the domain of practice, morality, politics, etc.) in the age of absolute dominance of meaninglessness, and hopelessness of all the available paths. Though we know that this is essentially a civilizational problem, though we know that a singular person independent of society does not exist, though we know that “personal is political”, though we know that an individual is in ways the product of material, economic, and objective relations and forces, we still found no other option but to, at least as the ingress to the confrontation, start from “personal experience”. Therefore, this work is an attempt at generalizing a personal problem; or put better, universalization by means of a singular confrontation. Emphasizing that this problem is personal is of course not meant to be an excuse for disregarding social responsibility or ignoring the social and intersubjective nature of the very “person”, but as the

audience will find out, this writing is a transition from the problem of one individual to the problem of individuals: from the subjective level (first volume) to the intersubjective level (second volume). Therefore, the criticism that the present text has individualistically reduced a civilizational problem (nihilism) to a personal issue is perhaps not befitting. Instead, the issue is that in such an obstructed situation, for the many reasons mentioned in this text, even to achieve civilizational outcomes, the individual subject is the only point of departure that at the very least I could find. The starting point of any confrontation is not some kind of abstract or imaginary universality, such as humanity or society, but the person's own lived experience here and now — without ignoring the historical, intersubjective, and networked nature of this very experience. So I, too, must repeat this statement of Hume in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* that “No reading, no enquiry has yet been able to remove my difficulty, or give me satisfaction in a matter of such importance. Can I do better than propose the difficulty to the public, even though, perhaps, I have small hopes of obtaining a solution?”⁴ As a result, the trajectory of this work begins with absolute hopelessness and acknowledgment of failure, and even now, after having finished writing the entirety of this book, I know that there is no guarantee that this work will have a positive achievement for everyone (or even just for those who share the problem) and that it will not end up in the garbage heap of history along with other failed efforts. Writing this text is an instance of gambling despite hopelessness and helplessness. If someone from the audience has found some hope or refuge somewhere else, no matter how small or faint, they had better stick fast to it and not waste their time reading more of such confusing and desponding texts. Lest, without knowing how, instead of finding a more solid principle or a more reliable haven, they lose

⁴ Hume, D. (2007). *An enquiry concerning human understanding*. (P. Millican, Ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. p. 28.

even their prior refuge and become hopeless and bewildered more than before. Let me clarify this bewilderment further by presenting an allegory.

Suppose a box of apples is floating on a stream. Inside some of the apples in this box, one or more worms live that, ignorant of everything, are feeding on the apple remains. They have no idea that they are inside an apple or a box or that they are floating in water. Now, suppose that one or more of these worms come out of the apple, come to an understanding of the apple they were inside, maybe even an understanding of the box, and even further, a comprehension of the movement of the box in the water. Who knows! According to the prevalent narrative, perhaps it is only humans who have paid such attention to the world around them, developed such conception of their living place, and even have gone out of the planet where they live and have looked at their apple from the outside and cobbled together various stories about the circumstances. But how much knowledge do they really have? From where did they get into this water? What is this box? Where does this water go? What is even their telos here? Who could expect the worms of our story to answer these questions? So why is human expected to answer the questions “where did I come from” and “where am I going to end up”? Human is thrown into this world. They neither know where they came from nor where they are going. Neither do they even know who and where they are. They are merely bewildered and lost. But because they cannot tolerate being lost (and of course, mainly with the aim of survival and satisfaction of desire), they have taken refuge in their imagination and have proposed stories about the truth and the telos of the world and, using the limited capacity they possess, have given those stories order. It is as if a worm that has just pushed its head out of the apple were to talk about a sea that this water is to pour into months later, or recount a call that it heard from the god of boxes, or speak of the promised land of eternal apples in the sky or the necessity of advent of the classless utopia of happy worms on earth. The issue is not whether what

they speak is true or not, the issue is that they have no authority to speak about such matters at all. Everything they utter, even about the very apple they live in (like this very allegory), is a mixture of their imagination and the limitations of their observation. Is not this precisely our situation? Whatever human has claimed about the truth, origin, or telos of the world has been a product of imagination, mixed in with some paltry experiences (because imagination does not work in the void and uses experiences as ingredients, though we know that imagination itself is reciprocally involved in the creation of these experiences). The issue is not that such and such statement about life after death is false or true, rather, the issue is that human has no conception of “after death” at all, like a congenitally blind person who has no conception of color. This ignorance is not only true of matters far beyond the reach of sensory experience (such as before birth and after death, the telos of the world, the telos of God, the angels, heaven, hell, the souls of the dead, etc.), but even of matters that are quite tangible and experiences that are apparently immediate. We do not even know what the status of this book in front of us is independently of us. Is it all a product of the framework of our sensing and imagination and there is nothing out there, or that some of its attributes are its own and we have imposed some others on it, or that it exists outside of us precisely in the same way? The history of philosophy has demonstrated that there is no way to resolve these disputes, and as a result, the victors are always the skeptics: that is, those who deny the existence of any definite knowledge about any objective object.

However, throughout history, thinkers had commonly excluded two categories of knowledge from this law: one is the absolutely conventional (one could say fictive) and apparently self-consistent knowledges that do not require any external objects in order to be verified (such as logic and mathematics); and the other is the sense resulting from immediate experience. But today, we know that these pseudo-self-evidents cannot be excluded either. Regarding the first

category, as Hume pointed out, they are so because they are not considered knowledge at all (in the sense of understanding the external world), and are a kind of game of truistic establishment of consistent rules (which, however, even if this very game obtained its absoluteness from itself until the beginning of the 20th century, today, after the emergence of non-Euclidean geometries, many-valued logics, and Gödel's theorems, there are many controversies even regarding their self-justification and self-verification). And regarding the second category, they are also not considered "knowledge", because at the precise moment that the immediate sense is to turn into knowledge and take the form of understanding, proposition, or utterance (or even made to appear as if it has value or absoluteness), it stops being immediate and is distorted and misrepresented in pre-given conceptual frameworks and other achievements of cultural-historical imagination, especially language.

What can human do in such a situation? Do they have no choice but to continue these imaginal games (at this level there is no difference between religion, philosophy, and science, all of which I have called systems of allegories in this book)? Is it not better for humans to assume the same instincts and drives as the basis, make avoidance of suffering and increasing of pleasure the criterion for their action and behavior, and establish moral, religious, and civilizational stories on that footing? And isn't this exactly what they are doing now? Indeed, any answer to this question leads us to the question of the telos of human. But who can determine the telos of human? Nature? God? Reason? Even though these three concepts are all the product of the same imagination, on the off chance that one obtains an understanding of the natural or divine telos, why would one even need to obey it? Though it goes without saying that this situation itself is unattainable as well and humans have no way of understanding such teloses, and how can we know for sure that when they claimed to have spoken specifically with God, or to have been hearing the call of nature, they were not

in fact speaking with themselves? Furthermore, by assessing the history of the formation of these concepts, we have found that they too are the product of the history of human imagination and culture, and all three can be analyzed at the level of storytelling (or in more technical terms: mythology): the myth of nature, the myth of God, the myth of reason.

If we were to present a brief story (or allegory) — and indeed, like any other story, a reductionist and selective one — of the development of this relation (at least in the birthplace of Western nihilism itself and the Greco-Jewish civilizations affected by it), we could say that “human!” has always lived in the battlefield of their warring myths. With the aid of God (Theos) and reason-speech (Logos), they rose up against nature (Phusis) and established civilization and culture. They built cities, enslaved nature; first, they hunted and picked fruits from it, later they secured more dominance and safety, they settled down and cultivated it and secured their other needs. Gods and reasons were the patrons of city, and as their numbers diminished, their forces became more concentrated. In the world that was influenced by the Semitic religions, due to rational and civilizational necessities, human proceeded from a plurality of gods to monotheism and invented the one God and the all-encompassing and universal reason: They worshiped the former and even turned it into a legitimizing agent for the latter (Logos-Idea was transformed into forms of divine knowledge) and human became the representative of God, or the grandest of creatures. But their insatiable desire to dominate the resources — which was simultaneous to the theoretical and practical collapse of religious institutions as well — was not satisfied even with this. As a result, later on, in the battle between reason and God, human took the side of reason — a reason that now claimed self-subsistence rather than one that awaits the graces of celestial reasons — and rose up against God. Though this uprising did not happen overnight, and at first, the authority of reason itself was transferred

from God to human, and then, gradually and over the course of centuries, divine rights and responsibilities were one by one taken away from it and assigned to human reason: God was no longer the legitimizer of science, nor the legitimizer of the state. Human, who had formerly attempted to perish in God and become God by enduring the most difficult sufferings in abandoned monasteries or the most severe austerities in remote abbeys, now had truly become God: but not by reaching God, instead by taking away supremacy from God as the greatest masterpiece of their imagination, and placing God's crown on their own head: the age of kingdom of human — the beginning of humanism.

In a collusion with reason, human banished God and enslaved nature as well: They who were the delegate of God until then now claimed Godhood themselves, and the earth (nature), which was seen until then as having been entrusted to human by God, had now become the rightful property of human. Such grandeur and glory! Human never experienced such grandeur and hope again. It took a few centuries for human to realize that they were not capable of kingdom: “Curse the day a beggar is given charge”. Perhaps reason could have acted as an astute and competent minister, but as a king, it turned into a delirious and destructive maniac. Even though they claimed to have banished God, they themselves attempted harder every day to play the role of God, walk like it, and even wear its robe, albeit in secret. Adorno and Horkheimer formulated such covert imitation in the paper *Dialectic of Enlightenment*⁵. All the myths that were thrown out using the threat of Occam's razor were allowed to reenter through the back door by modern reason and secretly hid in that which was supposedly the greatest achievement of reason, “science”: modern science as the killer-heir of religion.

⁵ Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment*. (E. Jephcott, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Today, however, there is nothing valuable left from even science itself. Due to the Baconian telos of “knowing the world with the aim of conquering it”, the entire vast field of science has been reduced to the narrow backyard of technology, whose reins are neither in the hands of nature (even though it claims to wish to understand nature), nor in the hands of God (even though it claims to wish to understand the origin of the world and the God particle), nor even in the hands of human (even though it deceptively promises human well-being), but instead, with the help of corporations and governments and armies, it is in the hands of a shapeless monster that rests on the throne of capital and consumption and, as if it were an independent character, acts according to its own particular logic and rationality. Human, who once carried the illusion of breaking the chains of their servitude to God and had placed the crown of kingdom on their head, today, after the decline of reason and the decadence of humanism, contrary to what they themselves thought, more wretched than before, has now become an absolute slave: that is, either the slave of their nature (consumption with the aim of satisfying desires that are seemingly primitive but effectively construed by culture), or the slave of their God or gods (feeling desolate and forsaken and their renewed thirst for finding identity in spirituality and fundamentalism), or the slave of their instrumental reason (in the limited sense of technological-capitalist rationality); though, the latter is capable of meeting the needs of both of the first two types of slavery: that is, it both offers, for example, the technology of having sexual relations with a robot, and an app for daily Bible study or a digital rosary counter. Human today is a slave to all three of their achievements, which now seem to live independently of them and rule over them in a kind of unwritten collusion.

So, on the one hand, cognition has become impossible, and on the other, civilization is in decline. The attempts in recent centuries to exit this situation have mainly led to the further deterioration of human civilization. Perhaps the

greatest, most extensive, and most progressive of these attempts was Marxism, which effectively turned into its opposite and caused the meaning and function of “fighting” to deviate for more than a century. Although not because of the well-known pseudo-moral claims and grumblings of its liberal opponents regarding the Siberian camps and the crimes of Stalin and Mao, more so because it fortified late capitalism itself. Let us not forget that after political uproars and after the dust of revolutions and cries settle down, the most attentive ears of all will be the enemy’s (in the conventional sense) who seeks to distort and dominate radical and alternative ideas. This is why revolutions fail or deviate from the “true!” path (i.e., the original imaginary path envisioned by the revolutionaries), because the revolutionaries’ understanding of the existing conditions and the telos of a radical action are self-deceptive and illusory, as well as the fact that their theoretical and conceptual principles are self-contradictory, and most importantly, the revolutionaries themselves have the deafest ears when it comes to hearing the call of their revolution. They inevitably must either be eliminated, or integrated into the reinforcement of their enemy’s forces. Although the very meaning and function of “enemy” is also quite deceptive. In the “political subject” chapter, an independent section is dedicated to discerning the enemy, but later in this introduction, after discussing some other preliminaries, we will briefly return to the “idea of enemy”.

On the other hand, we have talked of human numerous times until now and even in this very introduction, but there is no such thing as “human” as well. Today, human is a collection of billions of different people with different beliefs, cultures, genders, languages, races, colors, religions, heights, and weights. We will not involve ourselves at all with the endless controversies about the definition of human, the limits of humanity, or the human will in general. When we use the word human, we are aware of the reductionist nature of our

speech. This is not so because human happiness is not an issue for us, but because discussing human happiness at the beginning of the road leads us to an impassable byway. Although the individual finds meaning in society and we will talk about this in the chapter of “political subject” of this volume (and, if life permits, in the chapter of “politics” of the second volume), and although we will criticize individualistic approaches, we must, here and at the beginning, begin from ourselves, that is, from “our personal lived experience” and ask our initial question again, not from the perspective of human (because we have no access to human), but from the perspective of a person: from the perspective of the very “I”, with all the controversies and ambiguities regarding its meaning and nature. And it is only after that that it may be possible to reach an understanding of “us” by generalizing “I”. The nature of this “I” and its relation to the subject, from a philosophical perspective, will be clarified in the following chapters; however, the explanation of its psychological aspect and the delineation of the external-internal mechanisms of the characters that constitute the “I” has been deferred to the “psychology” chapter in the second volume.

We are story-driven animals and hear and tell stories all the time: whether when we are in the presence of others, from hearing or telling stories about daily adventures, to the story of the world and existence and history; whether when we are alone, from reading books and watching TV and movies and listening to the radio, to even in our minds, from recalling past memories and stories to storytelling about the future and its probabilities, and even while asleep and watching the adventures and stories that we call dreams. One can add even more to this list. In a word, storytelling is the fundamental function of the mind. We are telling stories and hearing stories in all the moments of our lives, and civilization is nothing but the allegorization of intersubjective imaginations (at the level of culture) about the main protagonists of our stories (that is, myths such as God, the world, and ourselves). Every story attempts to be an orderly and

believable story. But something always spills over from the stories. Every story exposes itself, and here logos (speech: the very same ability of storytelling-literature) finds a dual function: On the one hand, it attempts to express the story in a (more) believable manner and on the other hand, precisely for this very reason, exposes the story and challenges it: Every defense (making cohere) is a form of negation, and indeed every negation is a form of defense (creating a new narrative). A story that no one believes anymore, is a warped system of allegories that has sacrificed its constitutive myths: This stage is called the stage of decline. And currently, we are experiencing this decline in a dual manner: at the national level (and perhaps not regional yet) after the experience of political Islam and the collapse of the story of the realization of salvation through the rule of the perfect human, as well as at the international level (which we clearly associate with Western nihilism) after the experience of the collapse of the universal ideals of the left. Logos needs mythos, because without it, it has no tools and characters at all to tell stories. Mythos also needs logos to be expressed and to find order, and indeed, it is through this very expression and finding order that it provides the possibility of negation and contradiction of itself so that new stories come to be created and justified. In this sense, nihilism, as a rebellion against the believability and originality of these stories, has been living with and feeding on thought since the beginning of the history of mythology until now. But now, it is perhaps the first time that it has become dominant to this extent, and this is so due to that which Nietzsche calls the inability of “the generative forces” of culture to “invent a cure for themselves” (or in our words, the inability to invent a solution to rescue the believability of stories).

Nonetheless, an ambiguity must be resolved here: When the audience reads the above claims about the negating nature of the dominant nihilism, can they protest that with so many positive objective institutions and symbols and

forces at hand, how do we have the right to speak of the dominance of negation? The answer is that here the issue of negation and positivity is not brought up at the level of objective institutions (or what Nietzsche calls the positivity of negation), but at the level of defensible and justified elements that make life and action meaningful. And of course, the public spread and acceptance of the banal answer that “why would life even need to be defended or given meaning?” or “the important issue is life itself not anything more” is itself the best evidence for the claim of nihilism’s dominance.

In a word, the current nihilism — as the inheritor of all the nihilistic manifestations of history — has emerged from the practical and theoretical confrontation of human with the ineffectiveness of all the religious, scientific, or philosophical stories about the world and life, which they formerly believed in. But the nature of nihilism itself is also that of stories and in response to this, human creatively tried to embark on a new path: “Now that we have found no independent telos or meaning in the world, it is better that we ourselves give meaning to our lives.” However, the problem is that the slogan “Let us ourselves give meaning to our lives”, was understood and realized in an inverse manner, and it practically led to this outcome: Now that there is no meaning in play and all the religious and cultural authorities have become powerless, let us forget the whole thing and be merry in these few remaining mornings: This is of course a new story — and not necessarily a more justified and defensible one — based on the very same vague ideal of happiness or merriness (based on the satisfaction of desire) which aims to cover up or forget the previous unfinished and failed stories. A story whose characters, instead of human and nature, instead of Adam and Eve, instead of Christ and Mary, instead of heaven and hell, were this very same human, this very same body, and this very same living as a linear lifespan, with adventures such as: prioritizing consumption (a greedy eagerness to commodify everything and to consume the most unnecessary

goods); health obsession regarding the body, well-being, and longevity; controlled and insured (!) satisfaction of the desire for hedonism; and finally, the presentation of illusory alternatives (such as the myth of faith, joy, beauty, love, and the like, as an obscene yet commendable complement to the situation) to withstand the inevitable disappointment caused by the failure/victory of the process of desire. This is where forging a truly new path becomes meaningful: How can one, despite acknowledging the defeat of all the ancient stories, despite acknowledging the epistemic and practical incapability of human, not only not give in like the “latest humans” or fall into the abyss of unrestraint or forgetfulness, but in an aware and justified manner construct a new allegorical system, and based on it even establish a behavioral-practical system (at the individual and even collective levels) that gives new meaning and value to human living.

At first, the most crucial issue is “decision”. Despite the fact that this decision itself is not the product of an individual free will but rather the result of a series of causes that constitute an individual’s personality, mind, and behavior, be that as it may, at this point a person can “decide” — even though only at this same level of secondary agency. There is no primary moral code. The foundation of the presented conceptual system is based on this same “decision”. This “decision” draws the main boundary and keeps this text from getting involved in many endless and fruitless controversies. A person can, without any thinking at all, even without having made a “decision” from the moment of birth to the moment of death, behave according to the dominant cultural mechanisms and stereotypes and live in the pre-given myths of their tradition. There was a time when the idea existed that by merely informing the masses of their situation, they would exhibit a negative and critical reaction. But today, in the situation that Adorno called the dominance of “culture industry” over the subjects, we observe that the subjects becoming aware of the cultural

and biological vulgarity in which they live, not only does not lead them to a critical position and confrontation, but even strengthens and ingrains ignorance and vulgarity. As a result, the ideal of spreading awareness suddenly acts against itself. The reason for this can be witnessed in the most ordinary everyday discourse: “There is nothing to hide. Human is this very same thing that you see. As vulgar and despicable as this. So let it go.” The bitter irony is that one of the reasons for the exhaustive spread of cultural vulgarity in all the aspects and dimensions of our living today has been precisely the very same awareness spreading of critical thinkers and intellectuals in the last century. They showed the masses the nature of human and the origin of their desire and taste and precisely due to the lack of a positive alternative, it was as if they made accepting this vulgarity easier and even more entrenched for the masses. Perhaps two centuries ago, if a middle-class person was told that the music they were listening to and the literature they were reading were vulgar, they would have reacted negatively, but today the answer is this: “what does it matter?”, or even “all the better!”.

It should also not be forgotten that when we talk about “the dominant cultural stereotypes”, we do not merely mean the cultural stereotypes of the thought and action of the majority of the common folk, which are promoted far and wide from the city walls to the media and forge the dominant lifestyle of the masses, but as far as the audience of this text is concerned, what we mean is precisely the cultural stereotypes that include the minority and even their manners of criticism, protest, identification, and recognition. In this sense, although the person who enjoys Mozart’s music might seem more “educated!” than the person who enjoys Morteza Pashaei’s [Iranian popstar], this dissimilarity does not amount to any essential difference at the level of meaning of life.

Of course, outside of the row of idle souls waiting to follow the common lifestyle and thought and action, some people come to a new and critical understanding of their situation. Although they criticize a myth, they usually, in a one-sided manner, take refuge in another pre-given mythic system. According to the above formulation which was sketched very briefly and will be examined in detail in the chapter of “beliefology”, this uncritical refuge taking from one myth to another can be a transition from one religion to another, or beyond that, a transition from a religious belief to, for example, a kind of scientific materialism or vice versa(!), or even taking refuge in a pre-existing philosophical system. The problem is that, from one point of view, all of them could be placed in the framework of one-sided heteronomous reductionist submission to the process of transformation of human myth-making imaginations throughout history.

But apart from the above people, there are also very, very few people who are intelligent enough not to be fooled by any story. For example, radical skeptics who do not consider any knowledge or belief to be true. Despite their intellectual development, they forget that, theoretically, not believing in any belief is a type of mythic conviction and belief, and also in practice, passivity is a type of action and has the same amount of outcomes and consequences. Every moment they live, and inevitably, whether willingly or unwillingly, make choices, they are betraying their own disbelief.

Some others take nihilism to the highest level and turn a blind eye to the heart of the problem and simply declare the purpose of their life an unquestioning commitment to the possibilities of their desire and body and experiencing new and intense experiences. Although they are more honest than others, due to the contradictory nature of desire itself, they go through insurmountable fluctuations, and in the tension between desires, they lose their ability to judge and their freedom of choice, and although their choices seem

free, arbitrary, or random, these choices actually act based on a priori fatalistic causes that constitute their desire itself. This approach too not only does not help diminish the crisis, but instead, through the selfish nature of desire and the intentionalism resulting from it, although it seems to call for the reinforcement of difference and singularity, it, on the one hand, due to the hidden common source of seemingly singular desires (the culture that constitutes desire), in practice leads to the homogenization of the behavior of these desirous singularities, and on the other hand, due to its selfish emotion-oriented approach, aggravates the process of the many becoming even less capable of dialogue, as well as the violence in the battle over the resources that satisfy desire.

What other path is left? One path is voluntary exit (suicide), though taking this path directly as a result of adopting this perspective is quite rare in humans. Although I myself do not choose it presently, I recognize that a person, not because of being dominated by emotions, but while aware and calm, by acknowledging the illusory nature of all their myths and the unjustifiedness of any form of belief system, knowingly and willingly might wish to exit this game that they entered unknowingly and unwillingly; assuming that there exists an exit at all. However, in my opinion, the best audience for the present text and the most listening ear for these words is the very person who, at the height of desperation, is precisely at the threshold of such a suicide — that is, at a moment which is most open to new possibilities. Yet it is clear that suicide itself is merely also an effective action that all the above criticisms pertain to as well, and it does not lead to an answer to our question, but rather merely to the removal of the “singular subject” and the negation of “the person’s life itself”, and merely accelerates the arrival of death which brushes aside the problem.

Other than the above, what path is left? This serves as the starting point to enter the problematic of the present work, and my answer to this question is

“radical fighting”. The meaning and necessity of radical fighting will be explained and justified briefly in the rest of this introduction and in detail in the body of the book, but for now, let me just say that radical fighting is not initially a fight with such and such person, a fight with such and such political system, a fight with such and such religion, or a fight with such and such scientific theory, but an all-out fight against the dominant manner of uncritical human mythologizing which also constitutes all the myths that constitute the present situation: a theoretical and practical fight against any deceptive and uncritical mythologizing, from the myth of nature and the myth of God, to, this time, the myth of human, and even against dogmatic interpretations of the ideal myths of human, such as justice, freedom, and truth.

Perhaps at the very beginning, the question would be raised whether this claim regards all humans? Although this text considers its potential audience to be any and all, it does not intend to lower its assumptions and arguments to the level of these any and all and their presuppositions and concerns. Though this text has initially delineated the scope of nihilism’s conditions in such a manner as to include all humans — and even beyond humans — it considers its true audience to be someone who is aware of this situation and has found all other paths to be unsatisfactory and has “decided” to exit and as a result, they find themselves so desperate that they now take seriously even the most obscure glimmers and the most improbable hopes. It is for such an audience that reading this text is meaningful, otherwise, the one who is clear about their perspective on life and action and their telos (that is, they believe in a pre-existing system of allegories), will find this text futile, disorganized, disturbed, and boring. In fact, the distinction between these two types of audiences is in the same “decision”: that is, the distinction between being able to and wanting to; between possibility and will. So, if the question is who “can” be the audience of this writing, at the first level, the answer is everyone (though to be more precise,

not all human beings, but even all meaning-understanding beings — a scope that is probably in a relation of partial overlap with whatever definition we may have of “human”). But if the question is who “wants” to be the audience of this writing, at the second level, the answer will include specific people. And of course, making the “decision” as to which person is the audience of this writing is not on the text or the writer, but the individual themselves. This text considers everyone to be its potential audience, but it is up to each audience whether they can (or want to) deem (or make) themselves the actual audience of this text. Let me provide an example. Suppose I were to write a book about “chess techniques”. Who is the audience of this book? On the one hand, any understanding being could be the audience of this book. But who are the real audience of this book? Of course, those who, firstly, have decided to play chess, and in the next level, those who decide to learn chess from this book. Should the author of the chess techniques book keep the scope of their audience at the first broad level (i.e., all understanding beings)? Of course not. At the very beginning, they start writing with the premise that the audience of this book is someone who, in addition to being able to read and understand, has “decided” to play chess. The present text is also like this: Its general audience must meet the condition of understanding (logos). But the specific audience to whom this text is written must, in addition to this possibility or ability, meet two other conditions in the level of stance and decision (will): One is that they should have acknowledged nihilism (the necessary condition) and more importantly, that they should have “decided” to find a way out of it (the sufficient condition). This, however, does not mean acknowledging the freedom of individual will (in the cliché sense of free will or choice). Because people’s wanting or not wanting is not based on a sudden and individual decision, but on the cultural and biological factors that constitute each person’s identity and decision-making

ability. In this sense, presuming that this expression will not cause misunderstanding: Only the person who “can”, “wants”.

Now, perhaps a valid question arises: if all the foundations and methods of reasoning are suspect, then how is this very “decision” (which we assumed as a postulate) justified? This question can be answered on two levels. The first level is a negative one, that is, the level of this very prologue. At this level, one may say that this decision is justified solely because it is aimed at breaking out of the current obstruction. In this sense, any attempt to break out will be justified. The decision itself, the very will to freedom, regardless of its motives, formulation, and realization, is a justified step against the obstruction. But the second level is a positive one, which can be evaluated by considering the entirety of a system. In other words, though here, where we have no criteria or foundations, any form of decision to break out is defensible, yet later, once the fight system is formulated, we will justify criteria, foundations, and principles by which this decision, its motives, its formulation, and its realization must be assessed. At that level, not every negative reaction or decision to break out is necessarily justified, since it may rest upon motives, foundations, and aspects even less justified than the original situation. Thus, the answer to this question at the second level must be sought in the body of the book, after the full presentation of this fight system.

Furthermore, since every answer must be a comprehensive answer, this text, while acknowledging and aware of all the criticisms of the last two centuries against any form of systematization, attempts to present itself as a system (or an index of a future system). So, obviously the writer requests that the readers read this text as a systematic whole (though a plastic whole) and avoid butchering or reducing it to aphorisms or isolated sections. Regardless, the author clearly knows that the audience will treat this request as naught, and perhaps the purpose of expressing such a request is only to absolve the author

himself of the likely disasters that one-sided interpretations will later bring to this system.

Furthermore, this system constantly goes back and forth between concrete issues and abstract foundations. Because without concrete issues, we would not have a justified problematic (or issue), and neither would we have a justified answer without principles. The first justifiedness has a biological-concrete signification, and the second justifiedness a logical-argumentative signification. Though when we talk about principles or foundation, we must keep in mind that contrary to popular belief, in the current era, these foundations are not readily available to us in advance, in a manner so that we were merely to make use of them. Likewise, these foundations are not hidden in the depths of the mind (innate) or our world (realistic) in advance, in such manner that we are merely to discover them. Rather, it is precisely by starting with these concrete issues that these foundations are to be built just now and, vice versa, it is by starting with these foundations that concrete issues are to be addressed and a positive answer is to be given to some questions. So the beginning of this fighting seems Don Quixotesque: one person against all foundations. Although this person knows that they are both solitary and weak, they also know that in spite of their solitude and weakness they carry powerful possibilities that must be created, and that they might not remain so solitary and weak in what follows in the journey.

Another question that needs a brief answer here is the issue of mythologizing. Does this system claim that it is a system that is not based on any myth? Not at all. When human opens their mouth, they speak with myths. Mythologizing is the precondition for every narrative. Even the most rational criticisms against myth were merely attempts to present myths that they thought were more justified. Reason itself is also a kind of myth and indeed the biggest mythologizer. So it is clear that we too, through our imagination,

employ myths. But the difference is that this system tries to provide a “justified” system of allegories; that is, first of all, it attempts to not compose an uncritical mythologization (that is, for instance, unlike most religious people or natural scientists it acknowledges its own mythologization) and instead of extravagant and unjustified objective claims about the world independently of human or divine telos or scientific accuracy, it admits that it acts only by means of imagination and in the realm of pre-given collective myths. Here, the power of imagination, if accompanied by critical awareness and self-awareness, can, instead of just playing into the hand of pre-given uncritical and deceptive myths, construct new myths with new and convergent teloses and as a result, promise a new world: perhaps with a new reason, a new god, and a new human being, the telos of each having converged in a kind of plastic-organic system of symbiosis of myths based on the center of gravity of giving meaning to “living” itself (in a radical sense). Secondly, although it was mentioned that every answer is a comprehensive answer, this should not make us fall to the misconception that this system intends to answer everything and, in terms of episteme, choose an unattainable infinity in science as its telos and get caught in a kind of retrogressive trek in this unending pit. The issue is not that we cannot know everything, nor is it that we cannot know even one thing in the sense of realist absolute science. Instead, the issue is that we do not need such science to make our lives meaningful and defend it, rather, we need a kind of critical self-awareness regarding our imaginal system of allegories (which even includes science). Thirdly, in order to achieve this critical self-awareness, it is necessary to, on the one hand, shift from the illusion of creating a system without assumptions to presenting a system with unhidden assumptions: a system without axioms, but by embarking from “decision”s that guide, and, indeed, manifold postulates; and on the other hand, a theory of truth which is neither based on correspondence (realism) nor based on mere coherence

(idealism) nor based on mere efficiency (pragmatism), but based on criticism of all existing theories of truth and creating a new kind of theory of truth which sprouts from those theories' cruxes. This topic, to the best of the writer's meager ability, will be examined in the "methodology" chapter, but for now we can briefly mention that while this type of new theory of truth must rely on the internal consistency of the stated postulates and the conclusions (coherence criterion), it must also recognize the absence of this consistency and perhaps even discover/create it so that this new theory of truth can problematize the logic that rules over the present world and invent a new logic (negative criterion); and at the same time, it should be formulated in line with the telos and problematic of the fight against nihilism (pragmatistic criterion), but it should be able to discover/create the telos, not outside and independently of, but within the situation itself, and as the concealed problematic essence of the situation itself (immanent anti-pragmatistic criterion), and finally, while it must be able to acknowledge itself (coherence criterion), it must also include within itself the possibility of negation of its claims of truth, not as the false, but precisely as the truth maker of the previously-in-a-one-sided-manner-deemed-true (openness preservation criterion). In what follows, through borrowing from Catherine Malabo's recent achievements in a philosophical-dialectical interpretation of neurology, I have called this logic "the plastic logic of fighting". Furthermore, right here and as a prelude, in order to avoid being consumed in a kind of uncritical subjectivism — which, despite all these remarks, the audience who is addicted to reductionism, will accuse this text of — it is necessary to, despite defending the subject as the anchor, criticize any interpretation of the subject that is rooted in identity. It is true that if we start from any experience, that experience regards "I" and as a result, modern thinkers such as Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and Husserl consider this "I" the precondition for the possibility of experience and, as a result, unconditional, but

this unconditionality cannot be proven even at the most abstract level. In fact, if “I” is the precondition for any experience, then it is not unconditional, but rather merely one step less conditional than the supposedly conditional “experience” itself, and it itself could be conditioned on other things that are unknown. But here one should take the criticism further and ask if it is even the case that “I” is the precondition of experience. What reason is there for this experience itself not to be the precondition for the creation of an illusion of an “I”? If we deem I the culmination of the subject’s experiences, then it is these experiences that construct I not the other way around. Now, one could in response (for example, in a Kantian interpretation) say that here what is meant by “I” is not the empirical I, but instead the I as the logical precondition for the possibility of any experience. Although this second I seems to be a linguistic-abstract construct, even if it were possible, the law of identity of the two Is would be violated. The argument I (the sublating) and the predicate I (the sublated) are not the same. Now, what if we, while maintaining their distinction, consider both “I”s to be the product of experience? What right do we have to attribute such originality to subject, the same way that Descartes, Kant, Fichte, or Husserl did? At most, at any given moment, we merely have a vague understanding of an immediate experience. The attribution of this experience to “I” (that is, the rule that “I experience”) is as vague as the attribution of “object” to the world: both the originality of the object and the originality of the subject are questionable. That which is original at the moment of occurrence is a vanishing experience that is immediately no longer: or, to put it more simply, is an experience that is essentially unexperienceable, because the act of experiencing always arrives in the next moment, namely precisely the very moment the experience is gone. The rest (i.e., the experiencing subject and the experienced object) are both imaginary constructs of this evanescent experience itself! Only in this manner can one avoid falling to both objectivist dogmatism and subjectivist dogmatism.

Here we are dealing with a kind of originality of experience as something that is being negated, though one that is different from the illusion of positive experience in the empiricist tradition. This experience is precisely the simultaneously positive-negative experience of sense-understanding-creation, which is associated with a kind of radical idealism.

But despite acknowledging the above point and assuming that experience is original, despite keeping in mind all the criticisms against subjectivism, despite not falling to a positive, rigid, and solid illusion of “I” or the eternality of the self, still it should be noted that the locus of manifestation of this “creation” is the subject’s mind and action (though a critical and non-dogmatic interpretation of the subject). Here, the subject, on the one hand, should be understood as a cultural, intersubjective, and phenomenal unit, and on the other hand, as a thing that is becoming and is substantially always changing. Although Heidegger acknowledges the fundamental function of Dasein in confrontation with the question of being — Dasein as the sole inquisitor — he goes astray in the very beginning by starting from the two teloses of “being” and “the meaning of being” (instead of the meaning of the subject’s life). This criticism applies to any philosophy that starts with “existence”, “God”, or “the world”. Regardless of how questionable the meaning, nature, function, or even the existence of the solid and rigid subject (I) may be — and it is —, regardless of how controversial concepts such as “time”, “place”, “sense”, “understanding”, and “experience” may be — and they are — I cannot start from any outset other than that which “I” (albeit this non-substantial unfixed I) experience. Even the most radical criticisms against the subject too must begin from the very subject themselves and the “experience” which is supposedly attributed to “them”. This, however, does not mean acknowledging the dogmatic assumptions of the Cartesian-Kantian-Husserlian project — their mistake was their initial dogmatic conception of the very subject, not the choice

of the very outset — instead, it shows that every form of starting from abstract or objective concepts will remain in the same generality and abstractness and external objectivity forever. Therefore, although there is no essentially independent and fixed subject or “I” at work at all, every confrontation must start from a dynamic and non-essentialist interpretation of “I”, even if it leads to criticism and deconstruction of the meaning of “I” (or “I”s). This is why this text, as the first volume of a system, is named “level of the subject” and in terms of order of publication, it has preceded the second volume of the system (level of the intersubjective). This can be explained in another manner as well and in the author’s personal language of the subject:

In the age of nihilism, “I”, driven to despair, in confrontation with the meaninglessness of my life, tried to find a way out of this meaninglessness (or more precisely, a way of justified confrontation with it) and to make my life something defensible. The negation of subjectivity not only does not provide a solution, but even turns the issue of meaning and value into something fundamentally imaginary and illusory. To this end, “I” am inevitably compelled to offer a comprehensive system that is defensible and justified at least for myself. Perhaps because of the spectrum-like nature of understanders, and that individuals differ, this system will be true and effective only for me and will not seem so in others’ opinions, what matter? But one could, by relying on some conceptual and logical (generalizable) foundations, try to justify this text as much as possible for others (at least close or co-problematic others) as well, hoping that perhaps another understander would be found who will find this confrontation as justified as I imagine it to be. Or, on a broader scale, at least find some of its innovations and possibilities useful so that they would construct other systems in order to make their life and the life of people similar to them meaningful and justified. “I” should not harbor bigger claims, and “I” should also know that the result of the action of “I” will be interpreted not in the

subjective domain, but in the intersubjective domain: in fact, neither its mind, nor its body, nor its action, nor its experience, none ontologically belong to “itself”. Because it itself, both in its existence and in its creations, is intersubjective and as a result, is essentially historical and only within the framework of a kind of plastic mechanism of identity-finding/identity-making/identity-giving, can it be regarded as possessing a form of identity that is always “being-constructed/constructing”. Yet this should not be taken to mean the denial of every difference between the “I” and any other, insofar as they are distinct intensities and condensations which are always being reconfigured in the intersubjective domain—lest one lose the way into that night in which, as Hegel put it, “all cows are black”.

Furthermore, in addition to the above stances, here we must stand beyond the historical and anti-historical approaches regarding truth and criticize both. The anti-historical approach, upholding the long tradition of opposing change and praising stability, seeks to find a truth that is beyond history: whether this truth would be the immutable divine essence, the immutable scientific law, or even the immutable human essence. Granting originality to change and incorporating movement in the essence of substance and truth, will collapse all the seemingly stable and rigid pillars of these anti-historical mansions. But on the other hand, reducing everything to history, as has become common after Hegel, not only leads to extreme relativism in evaluation, but also places the very principle of historicity outside of history, and it forgets to make historicism itself historical in a historicistic manner. Moreover, though everything is indeed historical — not only in the sense that the value, function, and meaning of nothing can be understood in isolation from its history and conditions, but even in the sense that becoming and movement are in the essence of substance and are constitutive of truth — nonetheless, is it not the case that nihilism has destroyed everything today, even historicism itself, and left everything in a kind

of ahistorical and incomparable meaninglessness? This problem will not be resolved by historical grave digging about words and terms (fascinating philological and etymological games) which is the fashion among the continental philosophers these days. In a collusion with capitalism, nihilism has wiped history in such a manner that today ancient societies such as China, India, Iran, and Egypt, in comparison with newly founded (or occupied) societies such as the United States, Canada, or Australia — and also ancient languages in comparison with new languages — are dealing with the same situation; similar conditions can be observed regarding the function and meaning of newly established words and words that have centuries or even thousands of years of history and have found different manifestations in different languages (such as the very same words of idea, logos, and theos). Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that this dehistoricization can also be regarded as a freeing opportunity.

Though when we talk about history, we can also mention a kind of history worshipping that is not even historicistic, such as the reactionary confrontation with history which in fact in “ancient” lands like ours, has become a pathetic means for projective collective identification and has replaced the critical and concrete confrontation with the now, with a kind of nostalgic pride or conceit towards some ruins. Here however, regardless of these issues, on a more theoretical level, as a prelude we can merely mention two insights: Firstly, the precondition for the possibility of historicism is the elements that have made history itself possible by means of their non-historicity. In the following, we will see what these elements are and in what manner can they be extracted and presented. Secondly, it can be demonstrated that in fact, nihilism itself, which claims historicism in its evaluations and through it justifies relativistic conclusions, has a rigid non-historical core, and it is up to us to expose and

historicize this core. In a word, the main problem with the historical approach is that it is not sufficiently historicistic.

But a much more important issue: due to the essential contradiction in objective understanding, it cannot be the main goal or even the first step in the path. In other words, if slogans such as “understanding the world”, “understanding being”, “understanding God”, or even “understanding truth” were to be presented as the fundamental motivation or driving force of a philosophical system, they would lead us astray at the very beginning. Attributing originality to mere “understanding” is a bottomless pit: a regressive journey or a kind of “bad infinity”. Today’s science is so trapped in this unending pit that perhaps only an all-out revolution could save it; from hole to pit: from cell to molecule, from molecule to atom, from atom to electron, from electron to quark, etc. This route has no finish line and what we call scientific progress today is in fact a deeper immersion and sinking into an illusion of knowledge — one that not only does nothing to make life meaningful, but also takes no step toward its own alleged goal, namely, understanding the world (this issue is discussed further in the chapter of beliefology). Here is where one must defend, in Bakunin’s words, a kind of “*revolt of life against science*, or rather against the *government* of science”. “[N]ot to destroy science — that would be high treason to humanity — but to remand it to its place so that it can never leave it again.”⁶ When the ambitious term “expanding the frontiers of knowledge” is mentioned, if you look closely at this term, it will suddenly shrink to nothing. Of course, another example of these false “expansion”s that, despite having been a dream for human for thousands of years, now for almost a century has been realized and dazzles the eyes, is the expansion of usurped lands or traveling to other planets. When we let go of the childish dreams about “the

⁶ Bakunin, M. (1916). *God and the State* (B. R. Tucker, Trans.). Mother Earth Publishing Association. (Original work published 1882). Chapter 3.

desire to expand the frontiers of knowledge”, the main motivation for this journey is sincerely expressed as such: to find signs of life in other locations with the aim of creating a place for human life. This is one of the biggest jokes in history: human has not been able to solve their crisis on their own planet, now, by expending exorbitant amounts and by intoxicating shows, they are trying to find a one in a hundred million chance of life on such and such planet or even solar system or galaxy that is such and such light years away. This is reminiscent of Aristotle’s allegory in the first book of *Metaphysics* in his criticism of the supporters of Plato’s theory of Ideas: “as if a man who wanted to count things thought he would not be able to do it while they were few, but tried to count them when he had added to their number.”⁷ As if the human who has not been able to overcome their civilizational problems in this at hand habitable land, who is making it more uninhabitable every day, in a projective manner has the delusion that they can solve their problems in an uninhabitable land. But human forgets that wherever they go, they will find there the main cause of their troubles as well: namely, themselves and their myths — like a prisoner who, after being freed, carries their cell along with them. They must confront this issue right here, at home, and accept responsibility for it: “[Suppose] here is Rhodes, [if you are telling the truth] jump here.”

Let’s return to the issue of cognition and the story of “expanding the frontiers of knowledge”. The main problem lies in the internal contradiction of “cognition” itself, in any form and meaning. In every system of knowledge, the simultaneous explaining of cognition and criterion also suffers a similar fate. In a word, on the one hand, a criterion is needed for cognition, and on the other hand, obtaining a criterion without cognition is invalid. The revelation of this relation is one of the entries into confrontation with nihilism. We know that since Plato’s *Theaetetus* to Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, philosophers have

⁷ Aristotle (1924). *Metaphysics* (W. D. Ross, Trans.). The Internet Classics Archive. Part 9.

made great efforts to confront this vicious circle in other manners and have expressed their acknowledgment of the importance of the issue. But it is also clear that all these efforts have failed to offer a positive and efficient solution to the problem and, ironically, have paved the way for nihilism. But I formulate the problem in a different manner. Although, in the end, every field of knowledge and every system must offer a proposal regarding both “cognition” and the “criterion” of it (as the present system will do as well), this expectation should not be considered the main telos of constructing a system or its initial driving force. On the contrary, the main motivation, on which even cognition is based, pertains to the subject itself as well. In other words, the main and initial motivation (and indeed the only way to escape this vicious circle) is not the question of being, nor the question of criterion, nor the question of truth, but the problematization of the subject’s own living. Here once more, although only at the beginning, we can epoché the fundamental issue of cognition (with the same non-critical Aristotelian interpretation of it as the natural desire of human beings), in a Husserlian sense. And the main reason is that one of the necessities of nihilism (and the uncritical pluralism which is born of it and also produces it) is precisely the basing of the meaningfulness of life on cognition and the confrontation with its defeat. For this reason, via the challenges towards understanding truth and being and the pervasiveness of criticisms and doubts regarding any coherent system or macro-narrative of explaining the truth, human living itself was also shown to be baseless and meaningless. However, we should immediately warn that this position should not be reduced or distorted to an intentionalist position in the realm of morality, instead, what we pursue is this: even now, even in this introduction, all of us (the author and all the audience as well), before the presentation of any form of epistemic system, must have a justified defense of the meaningfulness of our lives, which is the precondition for the writing of these lines by my hand and the reading of these

lines by you. Contrary to the common belief, one can put the understanding of truth and being and the world aside temporarily and start from the subject and their living, not the other way around. Because the main issue is not “cognition”, but “defense of life”; our type of cognition (or beliefological system) is the product of this (biological-practical) decision, not the other way around. But before continuing the discussion, one question must be answered clearly: “If nihilism is dominant, is not this writing itself already subject to it as well? And if so, then is the battle not already over?”

Of course, the answer to the first question is affirmative. The notion of standing outside the situation is delusive from the very beginning. There is no outside at all and as a result, this very declaration of battle itself, this text itself, these very words are the product of nihilism as well and its logical outcome. On the other hand, specifically in this regard, there is no suspension or epoché. If nihilism is dominant — and it is — even the beginnings of thinking about it as an all-pervasive situation is inflicted by it as well and as a result, any attempt, even one that is apparently against it, is nihilistic and therefore doomed to fail. But this does not mean the end of the battle, for two main reasons: Firstly, is it not possible for the logical outcome of nihilism’s internal dialectic and its true realization to be its own collapse? In the body of the book, we will show how, using effective methods, the power of nihilistic negation could be used against itself so that it would produce a positive outcome and create new justified values. Secondly, in a nihilistic situation and world, before finding a way to overcome it, before finding a foundation to rely on, before finding a value to make thought and action meaningful, without putting nihilism aside temporarily, without establishing a temporary truce or any other self-delusion, is it not possible for only one meaningful and justified stance to remain: that is, precisely the “fight” against (or at the heart of) nihilism itself? In other words, no matter how supreme nihilism reigns, no matter how inadequate and inefficient our tools

are, no matter how weak and helpless and defeated and humiliated we have become, despite it all, “until we have not surrendered, we have not lost the war.” This is the true meaning of “hope” in the heart of hopelessness and helplessness. Philosophically, in the state of absolute dominance of meaninglessness, fighting against (or at the heart of) meaninglessness is the only action that can be justified and can make life meaningful, even though presently we still have nothing in our hands except a not-so-firm determination, not-so-reliable hope, and not-so-effective weapon. This argument too is in a way similar to the first moment of the emergence of the modern subject in Descartes: Descartes, in his second Mediation, by accepting the premise that all his beliefs may be wrong (even the then self-evident rules of mathematics, via the assumption of the intervention of an evil genie), claimed that, nonetheless, however much I may be deceived about any belief, logically and prior to that, there must exist an “I” who is deceived. Today, however, it is no longer possible to rely on that Cartesian “doubting I”, but in a similar manner, it could be said that no matter how dominant nihilism is and no matter how unjustified any action is, regardless of the manner of justification of the action, the very “fight (or even more precisely, the determination to fight) against (or at the heart of) meaninglessness” logically can be justified. In short, since nihilism is dominant, the fight is meaningful. This is also reminiscent of Albert Camus’s famous remark that “the only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.” But as will be discussed at the beginning of the first chapter under “fight and system”, regardless of Camus’s romantic and simplistic understanding of “freedom” and “unfree world”, this fight cannot be reduced to a kind of rebellion or any merely negative reaction. One could show why and how all these rebellings against nihilism have now turned into elements that reproduce and even intensify it. We will show that the radical fight, contrary to the common

belief, is not simply a negative reaction against an established “enemy”, but a fight that is to destroy destruction via its excessive negation and, as a result, take on a positive form, constituted of a justified system of allegories, both theoretically and practically. A positivity that is protected from the reach of nihilistic absolute destruction, though not by a dogmatic defense, but by radicalizing negation itself. But this is a multi-layered issue that we will address in due time.

However, we should also pay attention to this aspect of the question mentioned above: Will a fight that begins by acknowledging the nihilistic condition not already be afflicted by that very condition in advance? We will talk about our own fighting techniques in the section on fighting, but here and for now, as an introduction, at the very least we must demonstrate the need for presenting an alternative against the stereotypical interpretations of fighting. Generally, the precondition of the fight is said to be either a firm belief (for example, belief in an ideology) or intense emotions (action based on anger or hatred, etc.) towards a specific enemy. But if the fighting mentioned in this writing presupposes the nihilistic condition, then what firm belief or intense emotion or specific enemy can it rely on in the fighting? This is the answer: none. Neither a firm belief, nor an intense emotion, nor a specific enemy: none of them can justify the fighting. Firstly, any firm or ideological belief (be it religious, scientific, or philosophical) is dogmatic; secondly, as we will show, any intense emotion (especially hatred, hostility, and anger) works against aware fighting — here we must present a most decisive criticism against the illusory myth of the angry and enraged fighter (or the idealized case of class resentment) that has become dominant in the political atmosphere and instead, emphasize the key distinction between rage and intentness — and thirdly, “enemy” in the conventional sense is fundamentally nothing more than a reductionist or projective illusion, and as a result, action based on these

premises will turn out unjustified. True fighting, in the situation that all the belief systems have collapsed, is a fight without relying on dogmatic beliefs, without giving in to the dominance of emotions, and without the illusion of the presence of a specific enemy in front of the fighter. Its motivation is making life itself meaningful and justifying it. The questions of how such fighting is possible and what the conditions of its possibility as well as the means of its realization are, will be discussed in detail in the book. But this fight is to be a fight without belief, without emotions that incite, uncertain, at the height of doubt and hopelessness, but at the same time decisive: contrary to the prevailing conception that a decisive decision should be made based on certainty and confidence, in the age of dominance of uncertainty (though due to the revelation that any form of epistemological or moral certainty is false), a fighter must, at the height of doubt, act in the most decisive manner, though they must accept the responsibility of their action in full as well: “fighting at the height of disbelief” and “fighting despite the finitude of the individual and the infinitude of the world”. Here, the fight is not a consumer of (or dependent on) belief and episteme, nor feeding on unjustified emotions (whether romantic or hateful), on the contrary, it is a producer (or creator of meaning and justified emotion).

It is also necessary to provide an explanation for the phrase “fighting despite the finitude of the individual and the infinitude of the world”. Here, infinitude does not have an actualized meaning and as a result, it is immune to Kantian and quasi-Kantian criticisms regarding the attribution of infinitude to the object of experience. In fact, the issue is not that I know now that the world is infinite, instead, it is that I know that it is always possible for something more than what I know or experience to exist; and is it not the case that the *raison d'être* of the concept of “infinity” in its original domain, mathematics, was this very interpretation? In addition, every human being has by now thought about the contrast between the infinity of the world and their own finitude. For

example, imagine the time when a person looks up at the starry sky. This very small person, one of the billions of humans and one of the billions of billions of beings on this planet, suddenly observes that their planet is also a small part of a vast system, and that too is also a smaller part of a huge galaxy, and that too is also a very, very smaller part of.... This is the same feeling that Freud called the “oceanic feeling” at the beginning of the book *Civilization and Its Discontents*. But at the pinnacle of this feeling, when the same person turns their head from the sky and stares at the land and sees the surroundings, they immediately return to their minor concerns and deem them to be great and perhaps even the greatest events in the world. The two in this duality have always been presented in opposition to each other: one I call, following Freud, “oceanic feeling” and the other “islandic feeling”. We will return to this issue in the first chapter under the heading “the big and the small”, but in this introduction, let me merely mention the point that both facets of this duality are one-sided and deceptive: both the facet that always belittles human, telling them: forget your finite inferior self and look at the sky and become one with the universe and immerse yourself in the ocean, and the facet that reduces human to their partness and island and turns their individualistic needs or concerns into the greatest issues of the world. In fact, one side leads to false self-abasement and the other side to false self-conceit. One side turns human into an indifferent creature who ignores the biggest events near them, and the other side turns human into a creature who takes the most trivial things too seriously (as is the case with the majority of humans on the planet). The main issue is that these two should not be considered as separate ways, but in tandem, and even within each other: that is, the “constant and simultaneous” emphasis on infinitude and finitude, on indifference and intentness, on the negligible smallness of the individual and their greatness, on the ocean and the island — on the human as a simultaneously multidimensional entity. Someone might oppose and say that

perhaps it is possible to attend to one at some point and attend to the other at other times, but surely we cannot attend to both simultaneously, right? “We can, and must!” And the crux of the issue is precisely this “constant and simultaneous”: commitment and intentness towards individual responsibilities despite being aware of the fact that not only these concerns and responsibilities are temporary, but also that this individual human being will be destroyed as well in a few days, and a few days later the entire humanity will go extinct and probably not even a trace of the entire history of the planet will be left. But if this is the case, then why should one be intent regarding responsibility? Precisely for the reason that human is finite, and their life is finite, and in order to give meaning to their life they must employ mediating matters that are of the human’s own kind and experienced on a scale proportionate to the human’s own various dimensions — whether material-bodily or mental-psychological — yet without falling into the illusion of self-importance or false seriousness. It was by ignoring this fact that both sides of the situation, i.e. the transcendentalist mystical feeling and the reductionist instrumental rationality, jointly contributed to the emergence and reinforcement of nihilism. What we mean by “subject” emerges from the heart of this finite and infinite “constant and simultaneous”, and we will explain it in this book using plastic and alloyed logic.

In this regard, perhaps another criticism too might be raised about the current project: now that the individual is finite and limited, that they are only a very small fragment in the infinite machine world, that not only the individual’s living environment but their psychological and physical possibilities and abilities too are pre-given, that the individual is thrown (projected) into the middle of this world and neither knows where they came from nor knows where they are going, then what is the justification for “making life meaningful”? Is it not the case that all the deceptions so far have been the

result of this very creation of allegorical systems and this very giving meaning to the lives of individuals and societies? Is it not the case that this very attempt to justify life or this very illusion of “meaning” is indeed the greatest deception and the greatest deviation from the course of nature? Firstly, I sympathize with the critical tone of these questions. At the very least to me, the situation does seem like this. The world in itself has no meaning, and human, either without any role or attainable goal, the product of the blind causal course of nature, it seems that they aimlessly have come and shall go, or if there is a goal involved, humans has no reliable way of knowing it and they are busy fulfilling the telos of other forces unintentionally or wishfully and they are merely a doomed operator and a blameless intermediary, and the entire outcome of all these comings and goings has been nothing but suffering and suffering and suffering. But my point just begins from here. So what? What else can be done? Fighting against (or at the heart of) meaninglessness as standing against God (heteronomous divine telos), nature (blind natural causality) and human (pregiven roles based on natural instincts or cultural and social predefined cliché positions) is precisely concerned with this desperate situation and starts from it. A person has the right to stand up and, despite accepting all this, despite accepting the blind causal determinism, despite accepting their absolute smallness in front of the universe, despite accepting the pregiven condition of human and their inevitable destiny, even despite accepting that they do not have a “self” of their own, defy this game and cry out: “I have the right to decide why and with what telos I will live in this same short stretch of time, whatever the cost may be.” In this gamble, although the individual is completely the loser due to the dominance of causality, they can still hold the upper hand: but only by understanding, acknowledging, and living the truth that they have nothing to lose — that they are “nothing” — provided they know this, and are given the chance. Any “thing” will fail against the great power of the universe, but it is

only with this “nothing” that one can fight the “infinite”. The problem is that humans are still under the illusion that they have “something” to lose: biological life, health, tranquility, pleasure, reputation, emotions, attachments, etc. For this reason, the first step is to stand up against the very human itself.

Nevertheless, audiences will probably still be skeptical of such an emphasis on the role and position of the “subject”. It might seem that, according to this text, the subject is the only meaning-giving and value-oriented unit, as if the fight is essentially a subjective fight, as if we have regressed here once again to a kind of atomistic individualism in which everyone, in a sinking ship, is trying to only throw their own lifeboat in the water. These and similar questions are all serious and cannot be answered in a concise manner. But so far as it concerns the present introduction, I can defend the idea that though the subject does not have an independent and stable essence, though the subject is fundamentally constituted, though their desires, thoughts, and even their decision to fight too stem from causes that constitute the subject, in the present situation, which is not quite reminiscent of a sinking ship, but of a now completely sunken ship and human beings floundering in the water, we have no choice but to start from the subject. The subject is not original, neither can it play the role of a stable foundation by itself, nor is it even autonomous (in the sense of having free will), but it is a temporary node that has a kind of intensity to which, without falling to the illusion of episteme or freedom or even happiness, we can affix some concepts to: such as fighting, living, decision, experience, and desire. We also saw that this book has delineated its target audience at the level of the subject. Though as we will see, this emphasis on the subject is derived from the heart of radical criticism of the originality of the subject or exposing the illusory nature of the subject, the ego, and the individual. We have often heard that the personal does not exist and the truth is collective or universal. This approach has caused the subject to always

draw originality from the universal or society, and has handed over the realm of defending subjectivity to the liberalist reductionist interpretation of the subject. In this regard, firstly it should be pointed out that the collective or the universal lack originality too as much as the individual subject does. The desire for abstract universalization eventually leads us into the valley of illusions. The society is a temporary constituted unit as much as the individual is. Although from one perspective the individual is fragmentary in relation to the society, from another perspective, it is the manifestation of the same social universality, concentrated in one point; furthermore, the person is also universal in relation to their own organs and parts, precisely like an all-encompassing universality. Society itself too is considered an individual in front of the universality of human civilization and so on. Surrendering to the human desire of endless abstract games (whether towards expanding the macroscopic domain, or towards shrinking the microscopic domain), is not the solution. Though in confrontation with the individualistic and liberalist atomistic approaches, one should continue to criticize the originality of the individual and expose the fact that it is constituted. Still, the emphasis of this text on the subject can also be explained on another level:

This text (and every human written text) is written in a language whose audience at the first level, is the subject, not a language whose audience is the constitutive parts of the subject or communities that subjects constitute, which we know have their own specific language too and in other levels interact (or dialogue, in the broad sense of the word) with each other in a different manner. In fact, the simple reason why we are standing on the subject in this anchorless endless vicious cycle of part-whole, and that we have been able to find a handhold here, temporary and sublatale though it may be, is that our language (logos) is a language which is constructed addressing this specific level between the earth and the sky (between, on the one hand, atoms and the infinitely more

micro, and on the other hand, galaxies and the infinitely more macro). We cannot speak in more micro and more macro languages (the language between atoms or genes and the language between societies or planets) and in order to understand the relations between them, we have to translate them into our intermediary reference language. In a word, “the subject must begin from the subject”; otherwise, from the very outset they will fall into self-deception. Furthermore, the main problematic of this work, that is, the meaning of life, though can have its own measurable effects and manifestations at the more micro and the more macro levels, is specifically meaningful at the subject level. For example, compare the meaning that comes to your mind from the confrontation of a person (for instance, yourself as one of the audiences of this book) with the meaning of their life, with the confrontation of a brain neuron with the meaning of its life, or the confrontation of a nation with the meaning of its life. How does a nation confront the meaning of its life, except through individuals? Indeed, a nation is a wrong unit to attribute confrontation with the meaning of life to. As if one were to calculate the volume of a two-dimensional square. Of course, this text has not only not forgotten, but has repeatedly emphasized from the very beginning that nihilism is a cultural and civilizational issue. But the translation of this nihilistic issue at the level of the individual manifests in the form of a crisis of meaning and value. As a result, in order to confront this crisis, even at the same level of culture, one should start precisely from the same meaningful unit of living, that is, the person or the subject, through which we can analyze its intersubjective consequences. Excessive emphasis on problem-solving in a holistic domain (civilizational, political, cultural, human, etc.) carries the drawback of constantly referring to an illusory future in which all of humanity, or all of civilization, or the entire political system, and other such totalities could change in an ideal way. Put more simply, this text begins from the “level of the subject” as a reaction to the common

excuses that projectively claim justified living is contingent on and postponed to changes in some external political, social, economic, or cultural structure. For the fighter, no excuse exists; every moment and every place (right here and right now) is the arena of fight and practice. This issue is elaborated in detail in the chapter of “teleology”. If living has meaning, one must be able to realize it here and now, continuously and at the same time discretely. Though a person’s life might become meaningful based on a kind of utopian teleology — which however will be shown to be unjustified — but even if this were to be the case, still it is the person’s current living that, every moment in relation to that telos, is the object of being meaningful or valuable. If we do not acknowledge the value and position of this node, empty though it may be, this anchor, temporary though it may be, we would not find any other anchor and node in this terrible storm to start the fight from there. In this sense, the denial of this position is itself a nihilistic ruse, which can be observed, for example, in the hostility of the postmoderns toward the subject.

In a word, what is important is to be able to find the possibilities of the subject and to radicalize them, as well as doing so in a critical manner and without falling to individualistic, egoistic, self-important, and atomistic illusions about the subject. It is only by starting the fight from the unit of the subject that one can expand this fight on both sides, i.e. both on more macro levels (intersubjectivity and society: the external comprehensive structures that constitute the subject — in this sense, the awareness of the subject is actually the product of these forces and structures, and as a result, it is a collective awareness) and on more micro levels (intrasubjectivity and organs and senses and neurons and genes: internal components that constitute the subject — in this second sense too, the very awareness of the individual subject is also another kind of collective awareness). The present text, by means of the critical centrality that it grants the subject, has dealt with both these sides that

constitute the subject. So, I must repeat again that due to the fact that our problematic is meaningfulness of life, and acknowledgment of the fact that though this is a civilizational-cultural issue, it is experienced at the level of the subject, the level of discussion here is the subject, and as we will see, at the domain of morality and politics too the audience of this work and the scale of the discussion will be the subject (or subjects). This, however, does not prevent us from being able to, later (in other volumes), with the help of these foundations, in the realm of politics, instead of the scale of subject, start from the scale of political system (objective spirit) and, for example, talk about political systems and their connection, but here — in the first volume, i.e. the level of the subject — the issue is the manner in which the subject, regardless of what political system they live under, can engage in justified political action and realize the fight.

Though we know that there exists a simplistic understanding of the fight as well based on the same simplistic understanding of the “enemy” which was mentioned earlier. Undoubtedly, one of our main missions is to outline a precise and novel explanation of the meaning of “enemy”, which will be presented in the “political subject” chapter under the title “discerning the enemy”. If the audience at the very beginning conceives of nihilism as the “enemy” in the fight that text refers to, can one speak of standing against the enemy in a traditional manner? Not at all. Though it will seem to the readers that such an understanding of nihilism as the enemy has been presented since the beginning of the text. As if nihilism is standing in front of us and we ought to, by empowering ourselves, attack it and are supposed to defeat it. At the beginning of *Projections of Philosophy* (or the book of “questions and rebukes”), merely to state the problem briefly, I wrote: “In these battles, there is no stance against the enemy. The offensive base itself is part of the enemy’s territory and the offensive facilities themselves are a gift from the enemy. Every blow against the

enemy is a kind of victory for the enemy, since from the very beginning the enemy is in me and I am in hallucination land.”⁸ In this sense, though nihilism is the “enemy”, it is at the same time “father”, “guest”, and “home”. Firstly, nihilism is our home. Even at the apex of fighting, we live not outside nihilism but within it. Nihilism is like the air we breathe. No matter how powerful and tough a person might be, when the air in the city in which they live is polluted, they cannot claim that there is clean air in their lungs (for example, for the ridiculous but common reason that “because I believe only in clean air”). We are immersed in nihilism and everything that we have and everything that has been given to us is born from this situation. Nihilism is not a specific enemy against us, instead, it is our own situation. Even further, we, as critics of the situation, are born of nihilism itself: both for the obvious reason that “the precondition for the possibility of the very fight with nihilism is the presence of nihilism” and for the slightly more subtle reason that we, as individuals who claim to fight nihilism, are actually the logical outcome of nihilism reaching its limits and its internal rebellion against itself. One could even express the concern that our fight might turn not into post-nihilism, but into the strengthening and creation of another kind of anti-fight antibody, as has been the case in every fight in recent centuries (as was mentioned “the most attentive ears of all will be the enemy’s”). Here, another kind of understanding and confrontation with the “enemy” is needed. Although the battle is a kind of internal battle, the subject (or, to be more precise, intersubjectivity) can, at the same time as receiving a blow from the opponent, simultaneously turn this blow into a “gift”, without repelling it, internalize it and via a technical twist (for instance in *tuishou* fights), employ it in a manner that both weakens the opponent’s logic and, by creating a new logic, puts distance between itself and the enemy. Though

⁸ Ardebili, M. M. (2025). *Projections of philosophy* (H. Rouh-al-amini, Trans.) [Manuscript in preparation]. (Original work published 2020). p. 15.

understanding this technical twist and its “plastic fight logic”, which was mentioned earlier on another level, is the main center of gravity of this book. Here, the relation between thinking and fighting can reveal the hidden connections between two seemingly unrelated approaches: the fighter in the conventional sense, has a foothold, a technique for moving, and an enemy to strike. Thinking too has foundations, methods for argumentation, and a competing approach to criticize. The problem is that, in the age of nihilism, there is neither any definite foundation to lean on, nor any indubitable method for reasoning, nor any enemy to strike. As far as foundation and method are concerned, a plastic logic is to be created so as to realize this possibility by making it so that the foundation simultaneously is formed and gives form in a posteriori manner. Like a fighter who is to move on floating logs on a lake. They know that they can linger on each log only for a moment and must immediately jump to the next log, because the first foundation immediately sinks in water. The dogmatic two-valued logic cannot understand this plastic fight logic. For two-valued logic, there are no more than two states: either the foundations are reliable and so one can stand on them, or they are unreliable and so one cannot stand on them and therefore the person shall sink (our method should not be confused with probabilistic logic or fuzzy logics as well). But the true fighter, despite knowing that the foundations are weak, steps upon them vigilantly and critically (justified and critical use of systems of allegories), and takes their foot off them in time and steps elsewhere (the method of dance of the fighter); they have become so “capable” that, at the same time, they both live an aware presence and also deliver their blows. Regardless of the issue of the nature of the “enemy”, this question too must be answered: in such a situation, what does “capability of the subject” even mean?

Indeed, assuming that such fighting is justified, does the subject even have the capability to perform it? This is a point that is generally overlooked or

misinterpreted in theoretical discussions. The individual is a limited being and in certain aspects it has numerous weaknesses. To understand these weaknesses, it is not necessary to get caught up in finding a universal criterion of strength and weakness at the very first steps. The smallest change in the environment (whether physical-environmental or human-cultural) could turn into the greatest threat to the individual. The individual can also discern their own weakness, even in the very abilities they believe they possess, such as seeing, hearing, thinking, imagining, and so on, and gain an understanding of their own capability. Regardless of proving the truth or falsity of the conclusions obtained from the act of imagination, the individual could discover that due to their lifestyle (including the way they sleep, eat, walk, see, read, hear, and speak, especially in the technological and consumeristic world), nowadays they are so weakened that not only are they incapable of intense imagination or great creations, but even, in Pascal's words, they are unable to tolerate being alone in a room, and as a result, they cling to thousands of tools and rituals of entertainment and distraction in order to kill time and postpone confrontation with boredom until the moment of death. On the other hand, today we are dealing with a human who, despite extravagant claims and illusory power-seeking efforts, fundamentally wishes to remain weak (because power imposes more responsibility on the individual and creates more risks and sufferings for them as well). For this reason, at the end of the book a section is devoted to "empower the subject" so that, if the critic subject finds themselves weak due to losing the external agents that empowered them (though those agents were misleading them from the very beginning), they could rely on their "own" solemnity and capability (as a temporary but continuous collection of mind and body or a collection of minds and bodies) to partially compensate this weakness and empower themselves (though not with the "telos" of power, but in the "direction" of freedom). This reliance on the self, although it has its roots in the

modern, self-subsistent conception of the subject — indeed, every conception of the subject points to such self-subsistence — is, on the one hand, different from (or even opposed to) the aggrandizement of the ego (in short, empowering the ego, because of its servile function, leads to the weakening of the subject, though not necessarily the other way around), and, on the other hand, it does not intend to understand this self-subsistence in the reduced Cartesian sense of the solitary thinking mind or as a kind of modern subjectivism. Rather, it has in view a form of intersubjectivity that returns to itself, and the foundations of understanding it and the justification of it have their own independent section in the chapter of “ontology”. In the practices appendix, as an introduction to *The Comprehensive System of Practices*, a long list of weaknesses of the subject (or, more precisely, intersubjectivity, i.e., “we” — of course, not a pregiven “we”, but a “we” that is always in the making and becoming) has been presented and positive solutions have been offered for overcoming these weaknesses and empowering the subject. Here, the subject is conceived as an arrangement of characters and a mixture of body(ies), mind(s), and emotion(s), and subjectivity — contrary to the Cartesian tradition — is not reduced to a mind or thought separated from the body, nor — contrary to the Freudian tradition — is it reduced to the psychological desiring ego.

In justification of the appendix section of “practices to empower the subject”, it suffices to recall that the obstruction, while being cultural and social (intersubjective), is also subjective. The situation of obstruction precisely means the congregation of obstructed subjects. It is indeed subjects that have impeded and obstructed themselves, and through themselves, the world, and in fact, each other. So, in order to exit the obstruction, the subjects must become able to exit their own contraction and obstruction. Though this exiting is social and intersubjective and includes concrete historical and cultural manifestations. But how can the subjects exit their own obstruction? This

obstruction includes not only their thoughts and ideas, but also their body. The bodies are impeded. Ears rarely hear. Eyes are the biggest deceivers. The limbs sense touch in a vague manner, and most importantly, the mind itself always acts in a chaotic and secretive way. Though this limitation too is not merely biological, but at the same time cultural-civilizational as well, and probably has its roots in the distant past and the priority of the “principle of survival” over “understanding the truth” or “making meaningful” (because natural life did not need being meaningful at all) and it pertains to a framework of the process of progression of social and economic stereotypes throughout history (a level that neither evolutionist analysis in the field of biology nor Marxist analysis in the field of sociology transcends). The ability to hear, see, and touch is on the one hand contingent on internal capabilities (essential, genetical, individual, natural) and on the other hand, on predetermined cultural and civilizational limits. As a result, clearing the obstruction, and the ability to overcome the impasse, requires a radical ability to see the unseen, hear the unheard, and touch the untouched, so that it would finally lead to thinking about the unthought, creating the new, and living the unlived. This is where the body becomes quite important next to the mind: empowering the body to overcome the self, and understanding the subject as a mixture of mind and body. Though here one must resist a powerful approach that reduces empowering the body to “athletics”. Radical theoretical ideas are less so arisen from critical conceptual reflections, and more so from bodies that act radically. The ears, the eyes, and in general the senses, must be trained in a different manner in order to exit the contraction justifiedly. Here, the term “training” should also be reconsidered. In the common sense, training means to limit and to put in frameworks and to constrain. Radical training, however, works against the training of the ruling culture, and despite acknowledging a kind of discipline, it leads to a kind of unlimiting, breaking of the frameworks, and transcending: a kind of training

against training; and a kind of practice against athletics. More discussions in this regard, along with numerous instructions, allegories, and insights, will be provided in detail in the “practices to empower the subject” appendix.

Furthermore, in order to avoid a misunderstanding, we should speak more stringently about the “fight” itself in this very same introduction. Is it not the case that the statement that the fight itself is meaningful and makes meaningful, will become a justification for any hyperactivity? Is it the case that any environmentalist, any animal rights activist, any human rights activist, any military peacekeeper, any anarchist, any imprisoned political activist, any protester in the streets, any member of charity organizations, and any other such person can claim that their life is meaningful and their action is fight via this excuse? My answer is a decisive no. We will show that none of the above examples, other similar ones, and even ones similar to those similar ones, are not only not “inherently” considered fight and, ironically, distort and weaken the idea of “fight” itself, but also, as we will see, are generally the best examples of human’s “surrendering”. Though in order for such a decisive answer not to appear foolish, it should immediately answer the question: “Then what is the meaning of fight?”. Answering this question is necessary for a work that bears the word fight on its forehead, and indeed, the entire book, from the very first chapter (outlining the meaning of fight) to the last chapter (the concept of political fight at the subject level) is an answer to the question of the nature of fight.

Here, however, it is necessary to show that, in opposition to a kind of projective obsession with action, every fight is initially or simultaneously a fight in the realm of metaphysics. Though the reason for this is not reducing things to metaphysics or falling to some kind of obsession with philosophy. Rather, the reason is that any fight that does not rely on philosophical foundations and a justified solution for confronting nihilism, at the very beginning, due to its

inability to discern the enemy, suffering the crisis of criterion and the pestilence of hasty and blind obsession with action, as well as the discharging of the fight forces and the short-term satisfaction of personal guilt, and the desire to reach victory in the “short circuit” form and in the earliest conceivable time, in order to achieve a utopian-political telos, exhibits such follies that it easily is deceived and, before entering the real fight, it becomes enthralled by artificial games, even if a person goes as far as dying for it. As I show in the chapter “philosopher’s commitment” of the book *Projections of Philosophy*, this is why both the thinker and the political activist are easily deceived, because this fight requires one to be an aware philosopher at the very beginning — though indeed the philosopher themselves might also be deceived or defeated. In this regard, one should be honest, decisive, and alert. Media sensationalism, emotional provocation, and childish wishful thinking must be firmly set aside. In this sense, a suicide bomber member of ISIS who believes in salvation after the explosion and eternal life in heaven is not different in nature from an imprisoned liberal political activist or a dying altruistic protester or a screaming reckless environmentalist. Although the priority of theory over action is an excuse for inaction (which, of course, is an unjustified excuse, because inaction itself is a full-fledged action both in terms of energy consumption and being influenced, and in terms of practical consequences and influencing), we must not forget that the illusion of priority of action over theory is the greatest factor in blinding the eyes and deceiving the masses, especially the activists in the public realm in the age of decline. If the age of post-nihilism were to be possible (though with the critical footnote that there is the possibility for a more terrifying monster to emerge out of it), the first steps for it, though not in terms of precedence in chronology but in terms of precedence in logic, will be taken in the realm of metaphysical foundations. The reason is clear as well: so long as concepts such as justice, freedom, and happiness, as well as human, subject,

action, etc., still, at their depths, suffer nihilism and philosophy suffers obstruction, so long as the crisis of criterion holds dominion and there are no justified and defensible universal criterion for theory and action, how can the action of a political, social, or cultural activist be called justice-seeking or freedom-seeking and be defended? Obsession with action is the result of the inability to confront the obstruction in its depths. On the contrary, the issue is about acknowledging and tolerating this inability and suppressing the desire for blind practical discharging and premature ejaculation, and about focusing the forces on the main task, which is indeed the most difficult task and mission of our age: that is, the enduring of confrontation with nihilism in its depths. This is the only entryway to the real fight, and if we are to talk about “conquest”, the first trench in this battle is logic and philosophy. Starting projectively from any other channel (which is the fashion these days, even in philosophy departments), is a waste of forces and a contradiction with the purpose before it even begins. The words “system” and “metaphysics” turning into insults in the last century was itself a trick from the defeated thinkers to make their inability to positively create a justified and novel metaphysics seem like a virtue. Though as you will see, after — or alongside — logic and metaphysics, this positive fight will lead to the more concrete parts of “the justified system of allegories”, that is, morality and politics, and will try to lift the fight up to the level of each of these realms and accept the responsibility of the practical and cultural consequences of its foundations. The fight in the age of nihilism is not supposed to suspend other battles, but rather it is supposed to rearrange and explain them in a more comprehensive and profound context. But the main point is that these battles should not postpone and overshadow the fight with nihilism as well as the critical confrontation with the fight itself, even for a moment. Because the moment that the main fight is forgotten, the secondary battles will become

meaningless: like when the battery is pulled out of an electric circuit and all the lamps go out.

Therefore, it is clear that the main problematic of the present work is, initially, the same main problematic of nihilism. But since every answer is a comprehensive answer, the present work, inevitably, after outlining the idea of fight in the first chapter, will attend to the different aspects of this problem, in the order of precedence in argumentation, under the seven chapters of “methodology”, “epistemology”, “ontology”, “teleology”, “beliefology”, “morality”, and “political subject”. In each of these chapters, we attempt to guide the discussions towards confronting the main problem, nihilism, and if we encounter an obstruction in the topic, we attempt to provide innovations to uncover a new path, and ultimately, all these ideas, references, and innovations operate in the form of a singular organic-plastic whole. The concluding appendix “practices to empower the subject” is a selection from the first part of the book *Comprehensive System of Practices*, and though it is inserted at the end of this book, we suggest that one practices them at the same time as starting to read the book and according to the presented schedule. Although this appendix, as if it were a secondary appendix to the present system, is inserted outside of the book, but it is intended to give a kind of practical unity to all its parts and, from the very beginning, to realize theoretical ideas through engaging in practical practices in life. This practice program is the result of a collective and continuous undertaking with a group of concerned volunteers, which led to the design and outlining of a novel method of practices and instructions for overcoming the fifteen weaknesses of today’s subject — which is simultaneously constituted by nihilism and constitutes it. A detailed explanation of the problematic of the practices and the manner to undertake them is included at the beginning of the appendix, under the title “the idea of the practices”.

Furthermore, at the beginning of every book, one should answer this question as well: Why has this book emerged here and now? Although we remarked on this issue considerably in the lines above, I deem it necessary to, at the end of the introduction, add an afterword about the meaning of “here and now”. The denotation of now seems clear initially: the publication date of this book (the beginning of the calendar: the first year). But whenever one talks about the now, we encounter an illusion, as if one has assumed to know what the now is: “Well, now means right now.” Thinkers are always encouraged to pay attention to the “now” and to think about the problems of the “now”. As if the now is a pre-given and at hand thing, and the thinker is merely supposed to turn their attention towards it. Of course, that is not the case. We never fully know what the “now” is. Because the “now”, “the present time”, “the contemporary”, and other similar terms are always unclear, elusive, and incomplete. We can only understand the now — supposing we are able to — if it has concluded and has been determined. On the one hand, as soon as we talk about the moment of now, it has become the past and as a result, talking about the now is always impossible. On the other hand, if we consider the now not as a moment, but as a historical period, now we cannot even name the “now”. Because naming requires determinedness and determinedness requires boundaries. Even if we put aside the endless debates over the beginning moment of the now (or the contemporary) era, what can we say about the final moment of the now era? So is it that we cannot talk about the now at all? Of course we can and indeed we must. But not by relying on a delusional naive conception of the “now”, but by accepting that in order to think about the “now”, we need, more than and before perceptive eyes that observe the current situation, a prophetic intuition and insight for outlining the plausible boundaries of the now as well as attempting to name it (from the perspective of the future). Though according to a Hegelian-Lacanian insight, “the word is the murder of the Thing”, and for this

reason, it seems that the true name of any era is created after it has ended, still this standpoint too forgets that the process of naming is, like the process of interpretation of text and dream, a never-ending process, and as a result, each era can be named again and again, have its boundaries redrawn, and be argued over again and again. Nonetheless, this does not negate the fact that every thinking about the now is a kind of prophecy: though a prophecy that is constantly critical and under revision. In the book, by creating the concept of “pliable time”⁹ we attempted to shed some light, dim though it may be, on this topic. But as far as it concerns the present introduction, what I call the “now” is the midst and the height of the age which, as was mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, one of the keenest prophets of history have called “the age of nihilism”. Though the predicting of when this age shall end depends less so on our power of prediction and inspiration and more so on fortune and “our” fight power towards realizing this end.

Today, this nihilistic situation is more obvious and more hidden than it was in Nietzsche’s time. It is more obvious, because naive hopes in all the straightforward modern answers to the meaning of human life, from positivism to the two opposite sides of materialist Marxism and secular spiritualism, have collapsed, and “the last human” has reached their limits. It is more hidden, because even the understanding of this absolute nihilism and hopelessness, which in the West, in the middle of the 20th century (from Heidegger to Derrida), took several decades, at the end of the last century, as a result of the battle becoming one of attrition and the failure of human to find a way out, despite not being declared concluded, this understanding was gradually and

⁹ This term is coined by the author and explained in the book, in a critical confrontation with three conceptions of time: linear, circular, and spiral. The original Persian-Arabic term is *tavaroxi*, the adjective form of *tavarox* “to become pliant” which also evokes *tarix* “history”, so much so that a more precise representation of the original term would be historical-pliant time. —Trans. note.

deliberately forgotten. Today, in the birthplace of that great prophet, in the Europe of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus, and Bataille, nobody thinks too long about nihilism anymore. It is as if they have accepted that this “door” will never open, it was never even supposed to open, so let us, in the few mornings that we are alive, enjoy the circumstances of this situation itself, paint the bricks of the dead-end alley, and if there is a desire to protest and battle still left in us, squander it in attractive slogans, colorful carnival-parades, and loud but insignificant protests, and thus satisfy our need for action and keep ourselves satisfied. We have accepted that human is what it is, but we have also understood that if we constantly beat the drum for the declaration of this truth and keep nihilism out in the open, since we have no way out of it, we would become so caught up in bitterness and pessimism that we would not enjoy these few days of life either, so why spend it tormenting ourselves? Instead, we can talk about art and cinema and theater and painting and literature, make up stories about human emotions and dreamy landscapes and artistic creativities, and, in order not to be seen as silent, criticize tyranny in the global south and the limitations and brutality of the uncivilized societies and without paying mind to our own destructive role, perhaps even issue a statement condemning them. On the other hand, in other parts of the world, the basic problems of everyday life (due to a collusion of sorts between global imperialism, slave-breeding culture, and domestic tyranny), from the minimum of food and clothing to a minimum freedom in lifestyle and political action, are so manifest that people generally assume that they do not even have the chance to, beyond these basic needs, think about the nihilism they face. Perhaps, from the perspective of some, “our” situation looks like that of a person with a nail stuck in their foot. All they are concerned with is relieving this pain. They cannot, due to the severity of the pain, think about the nature of human, the nature of the world, the purpose of living, or even the delicious taste of the food they are eating or the feeling that

emerges because of the music they are hearing. For them, life is just suffering. After pulling out the nail and relieving the pain, they might be able to think about other things, that is, in case they wish to and others let them. Nonetheless, this allegory too is one-sided, and is the result of evading responsibility, because on the one hand, there is no guarantee that the aching human will not have greater motivation to reflect on the very nature of pain; and on the other hand, in such societies, the meaningful and urgent fight is in fact simultaneously a fight against this very cultural poverty and against the false prioritizing of a superficial understanding of politics (or political obsession). Perhaps in these societies, the masses, under the “illusion” of a nail in their feet, have diminished to merely displaying blind emotional reactions to the situation, or in the best case scenario, they dwell on the dream of immigrating to the free prosperous world, but the hope in insightful creative individual subjects, as the concentration of the awareness of a society, in case we were to have such hope, this hope would be more meaningful in places like “here”¹⁰. Of course, it is clear that the expressing of this hope by me is biased as well, since it is a hope precisely in myself, my fight, and the possibilities of my society. In this sense, the meaning of the “now” is already associated with the meaning of “here”. But in any case, this situation, the split “now” situation of this text, due to the dominance of planetary nihilism, is the simultaneous now of Tehran and Paris as well. But on the other hand, let me assert in a seemingly exaggerated tone that the “now” of this work is “eternal” as well. In fact, though this work is “personal” and has emerged from this time and is a reaction to today’s issues, it claims on the other hand that the problem is inherent to the “universal person” and the “entirety of history”. As Strauss shows, this issue can even be found in Plato himself too, and throughout human history, nihilism has always been operating as a kind of anti-system rebellion, and probably newer forms of

¹⁰Such societies, such as the author’s. —Trans. note.

it, perhaps under other names, will remain with them until the end of human life. In this sense, every work of this kind finds itself facing the entire history of humanity, and its true audience — the audience that must be created — are they who are yet to come and they who are gone: those so that they are redeemed and these so that they are summoned.

I mentioned the simultaneous now of Tehran and Paris. After addressing the question of “why this text now?”, at this moment we must also address the question of why “here”? And even before that: Where is the “here” of this text? Of course, at first some kind of geographical here comes to mind: The planet? Global North and South? The West and the East? Europe and Asia? Iran? Tehran? Perhaps once it was possible to talk about the distinct nature of here and there: about Asia versus the West, about the Third World versus the First World, about the Muslim world versus the infidels, etc. However, without wishing to get into the endless debates over definitions and boundaries, I can claim that, regardless of my dual relationship with conventional divisions, today, “here”, or more precisely, the here of this specific text, transcends all these boundaries. If more than two centuries ago, Goethe claimed in the *West-Eastern Diwan* that: “The Orient and the Occident can no longer be separated”, is it not the case that this truth, though not in the manner that Goethe hoped, is more manifest today than then? It can be shown that today due to the dominance of a single economic system, similar cultural elements, prevalent globalization, extensive relations, the ever-increasing improvement and spread of enhanced collective technological communication tools, and most importantly, the interaction and collusion of all forces in the new consumerist economic-cultural globalization (culture industry), despite the differences in manifestation and consequences, the roots of the crisis in different societies, in a sense (precisely the same sense which is the center of gravity of this writing), are similar, or at least related. For example, true though it may be that, for instance, in a country like Iran, an

intellectual's concern is domestic political tyranny, defective economy, and oppression of lifestyle, while, for instance, an intellectual's concern in France is the environment, labor laws, and the integration of immigrants into the host society, is it not the case that both of them deep within suffer from issues with common roots? In the political-economic realm, is it not the case that the justification of tyranny, the denial of civil and political liberties, and the society giving up due to the lack of a foundation that would legitimize paying the necessary price in Iran, have their roots in the same crisis of relativity, which, for instance, causes not only the government and the far-right movement, but even French intellectuals or activists to, for example regarding the issue of immigrants, have no practical alternative to offer other than the solution of integration, and conversely causes the second-generation immigrants in France to suffer identitylessness and lack of integration in the host society, and to become inclined to extreme fundamentalist approaches? Or in the economic realm, due to the uniformity of the global market, is it not the case that the unemployment issue caused by the high minimum wage in Italy and Greece is related to the factors that cause China to remove tariffs and, as a result, reduce workers' wage? Is it not the case that the increasing ubiquity of the barren political alternatives known as "choosing the lesser of two evils" as the only possible method of democratic action, from America (between Biden and Trump) to France (between Macron and Le Pen) and even Iran (between Rouhani and Raisi) is itself evidence for a kind of commonality in lack of liberative alternatives on both sides of the planet? And most importantly, despite all the political, economic, and cultural differences, is it not the case that we can pose the question of the "meaning of life" as a universal issue? In any case, in my opinion, despite acknowledging all the differences, precisely due to the dominance of nihilism, there are issues that are truly fundamental that are shared and defining for what we today call "human". So in this sense, the

“here” that I intend is any “here” where the postmodern consumerist last human living in the economic neoliberalism resides: that is, in a sense, the entire planet.

But I also acknowledge a kind of specific “here” in terms of language. This text is intentionally written in the “Persian” language. Of course, not because of the illusion that, for instance, the Persian language is grand and is superior to other languages or has extraordinary hidden possibilities, but for the simple reason that its author thinks in Persian, and as a result, has the right to write his thoughts in the language that he lives and thinks in. Though this decision to write in Persian is at the same time a reaction to the self-deprecations and profuse derisions by contemporary intellectuals towards this “specific language” with the baseless justification that “Persian is not a language for philosophical thought”. Therefore, though the audience of the meaning of this text can be any person with any language, the more direct audience of it are those who know Persian (who should be distinguished from Persian speakers), and be that as it may, if this text were to have/find some value, later on, others will come who shall think about it and its consequences in other languages.

In addition to the linguistic here (Persian), we can talk about the political here (the country of Iran at the beginning of the 15th century Solar Hijri¹¹). Our here is a special here and has special possibilities for facing nihilism. On the one hand, the main difference between the confrontation of the Muslim world with the West and other confrontations is that our confrontation (the Muslim world with the Western world) is a kind of family confrontation for two reasons: first, because of the shared Greek roots of Islamic philosophy and Western philosophy, and second, because of the shared father of the religious myth dominating our intersubjectivity, i.e., Abraham. And is it not the case that

¹¹ That is, 2022 A.D. —Trans. note.

nihilism (in its specific sense) is the result of the confrontation of the Abrahamic-Greek world with the decline of its myths? In a word, both of “us” are, in the realm of Logos, children of Plato (or textually, the extensions of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*) and in the realm of Mythos (Theos), children of Abraham (or textually, extensions of the *Old Testament*). Our wars, from the Crusades to today’s Westernophobia of the Muslim world and Western Islamophobia, is a war between Abraham’s own children. Other parts of the world, such as East Asia, Central and Southern Africa, and Native Americans are in a different circumstance regarding their confrontation with the West. In this sense, we already have a significant part of our myths in common (such as our interpretation of the God of Abrahamic religions, the myth of creation, and the idea of the Judgment Day and the like which for instance do not exist in Eastern religions). We know that our dialogue with Western philosophy, over the centuries, has been a real and internal dialogue and the Platonic-Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophical tradition underwent its transformations and developments here and reached its pinnacle in al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes and was reflected back to the West itself. Today, it is no longer difficult to show the Avicennian roots of Saint Thomas Aquinas or the influence of Averroes’s Aristotelianism on the criticisms of the 12th and 13th centuries against the dominant scholastic Dominican approach (especially in the school of Latin Averroesians), or even their effects on the formation of the modern thought. The issue of the manner of this reflection and the interruption of the dialogue after it, is a voluminous one that has nothing to do with the present project. But the issue of having influential historical commonalities in philosophy and religion, makes the manner of our confrontation with the issue of the West, here nihilism, a simultaneously external-internal one: neither entirely internal like the Westerners’ own confrontation with themselves, nor entirely external like the confrontation of China, India, Japan, etc.

On the other hand, now that the characteristic of our confrontation in the Muslim world with Western nihilism has been mentioned, we can make this distinction more determined and show why living in the political atmosphere of Iran today has given a unique characteristic to our confrontation with nihilism. The most important of these characteristics is living under a government that has emerged from a modern leftist revolution with Shia motives. The experience of fully realizing political Islam to the limit has granted us, earlier than other Muslim countries at least, an internal understanding of secularism. Though this characteristic is not unrelated to Shiism. The Shiites, who have always had a critical, oppressed, and concealed (Taqiya) standpoint throughout the centuries, and the clerics who, even in the Shiite governments from the Safavid dynasty onwards, always had an ambivalent relationship with the government and were positioned between the people and the court, suddenly had the direct opportunity to form government. This Shiite collective spirit, which had developed the feature of vengefulness due to numerous oppressions (indeed as it is well-known, many Shiites are, for the realization of their apocalyptic utopia, “waiting for the avenger” rather than the savior), ran out of patience and before the emergence of the righteous savior, proceeded to form government itself. The main reason for the misunderstanding of the leftist and liberal intellectuals regarding the 1979 revolution and the naive interpretation of “stealing or confiscation of the revolution by the clerics” stems from their ignorance of the historically accumulated demand that, in fact, dominated the mentality of the “people” and the “masses”. The leftists merely provided a platform for the discharging of this revenge and they themselves became its victims too. The government of the Shia clerics has arisen from the common will of the Shia community, and the failure of all the external attempts to overthrow it so far (from the eight-year war to the various coups to the various foreign security threats), contrary to (or in a sense faster than) other countries in the

region, fortunately has granted us the opportunity to proceed from the historical desire for theocracy to the experience of its failure. However, in the political and the media realm, we still witness that the majority of the opposition and the enemies of this government are trying to, again by resorting to a kind of reactionary vindictive vengefulness, repeat another form of retrogression. We will talk about the meaning and value of the concept of “political experience” in the “political subject” chapter, but regardless of the political concerns, the issue is that living under the geographical domain of the experience of the rule of Shiite political Islam (even for non-Muslims or non-Shiites or other ethnicities and races in this country), despite the many sufferings and hardships, is a unique experience that due to the confrontation with the experience of the failure of this project, grants the possibility of, more progressively than many countries in the region (especially the experience of overnight artificial-forced modernizations of the Persian Gulf countries), a distinct confrontation with the West, especially the nihilism that is the consequence of social immanent secularism. In this sense, without wishing to overlook the differences or bypass the historical experiences of others, it can be said that Western nihilism, and the lack of a justified positive alternative in the various domains of politics, morality, metaphysics, etc., simultaneously corresponds to our own present lack of an alternative (resulting from the failure of Islamic and leftist ideological ideals and the dominance of an all-pervasive planetary consumerism). In most parts of the Muslim world, this is still overshadowed by the desire to realize the “ideal Islamic government” (for example, consider the consequences of the Arab Spring, or even the re-occupation of Afghanistan by the Taliban).

Of course, the comments above about “here” should not fuel some kind of illusory nationalism. In fact, every region in the world has a unique “here”. If one day a Brazilian or Japanese thinker were to talk about their confrontation

with the West and its obstructions, they must explain the characteristics that make their “here” unique. But I, by virtue of the way I have been projected (thrown) into this time, this language, and this place, tried to show what possibilities of liberation are present in my here and now. This will help us later, especially in the realm of politics, to find out how, despite the different political situations of here and there, one can connect the exit techniques, and cultivate ideals and hopes that are more universal that may in turn one day even lead to the coming together of the fights and the comrades. Because in the end, the central here, the here of the many heres, is the here of omnipresent planetary nihilism.

Although throughout the text there are references, sometimes critical, to the inspiration sources of this system, it is necessary here to acknowledge the nine sources of inspiration this text is indebted to, each of which will be assigned to one of the following three groups, by referring to nine names: 1. Clearly the problematic, terminology, and methodology of this work are firstly understood in the vast and diverse land of Western philosophy. There, three sources are very important to me: first, Spinoza as the first modern monist, second, Hegel, as the pinnacle of the system-building human mind and the essence of Western philosophy, and third, Nietzsche, as the greatest prophet of our time and the herald of the issue of nihilism. I have also benefited immensely from the great post-Nietzsche thinkers, such as Husserl, Heidegger, Adorno, and Derrida (and especially the idea of plasticity proposed by Catherine Malabou or the idea of scientific revolutions by Thomas Kuhn), but since this project is to provide a kind of positive metaphysical-civilizational outline — though for the time being at the level of the subject —, it tries to stand critically on the shoulders of Hegel and Nietzsche and by using the possibilities in the both sources, attempts to work toward clarifying and unfolding the issue of nihilism. 2. In addition to “the West”, in a sense similar to when I referred to my geographical “here”, I am

indebted to the three intellectual traditions that are called Islamic philosophy (or philosophy among Muslims) (though one can dispute this categorization itself): Illuminationism philosophy (for instance Avicenna), Peripatetic philosophy (for instance Suhrawardi), and Sadra'i philosophy (for instance Mulla Sadra). Although in the first encounter with the problematic and content of this book this indebtedness seems dubious, but to the extent of my ability and knowledge, I strove to recognize and make use of these three bubbling springs. Nonetheless, this indebtedness is indeed critical and is an acknowledgment of the obstruction that we have been living in for more than four centuries. My concern is not merely referring, using, or criticizing these three movements, rather, I am looking for forsaken moments through which one could shine a light on the West and the East. Though as soon as one mentions shining a light, some lovers of Islamic philosophy will claim that "yes, this light must be shone", and some, more cautiously, "this light must be found". But in my opinion, there is no light, neither to be shone nor even to be found. At best, there are rusty dusty lamps buried in the depths of books and crypts, which may one day be extracted, dusted, and lighted. All three of these prerequisites (i.e., extracting, dusting, and lighting), on the one hand, require seeking aid from other intellectual movements in the East and the West, and on the other hand, require a radical and ruthless critical confrontation with these sources themselves. This is the same problem-oriented radical critical confrontation that, despite some praiseworthy efforts, in the last four centuries, the lovers and disciples (who nonetheless consider me an outsider in that land) have not undertaken yet. 3. Finally, although we understand the issue of nihilism as a Jewish-Greek or Abrahamic-Platonic issue, to unfold it, we need to rely on other forces that the West (in the sense that would include us) lacks. In particular, a kind of "positive awareness" is needed whose warmth could melt the obstruction and frigidity that dominates Western thought. An awareness that

independently finds an ontological nature and can be creative and effective: And this awareness is found in the most evident and effective form in Eastern wisdom. Interestingly, we find that a kind of nihilism, albeit in a different sense, has a long history in the East. Here I must point to three main sources of inspiration: first, the Buddha (not only the Pali Sutta texts themselves, but also the various traditions that grew out of them, from Theravāda to Mahāyāna); second, Daoism (especially the works of Laozi and Zhuangzi), which later, through fusion with a reinterpreted account of Buddhism (via Bodhidharma), became the Chinese Zen school and, in the 13th century, was brought to Japan by Dōgen, leading to the establishment of the Japanese Zen school (Sōtō). I also drew upon the works and teachings of the esteemed contemporary master Mahasi Sayadaw (and his follower the monk Sayadaw U Jotika), as well as the more radical interpretations of the Buddha's teachings in the forest tradition (particularly those of the venerable monk Ajahn Chah and his progressive disciple Ajahn Nyanamoli), especially at the level of the preliminary practical techniques included in the practices appendix. The rich wisdom derived from these sources — especially their intertwined understanding of “mind” (thought), “emotions” (psyche), and “body” (physical form) — has inspired some of the ideas of this text. Nevertheless, as readers will observe, a strongly critical approach has been taken toward the myths and foundations of all these traditions, so as to avoid falling into the failed and, indeed, nihilistic experience of Western Buddhism.

I also need to point out an inevitable level of reductionism in this text. In this work, the names of different philosophers or schools is mentioned a great many times, a standpoint is attributed to them, and that standpoint is criticized mainly to rise above them. Perhaps a critical audience will rightly raise the criticism that here I have attributed a superficial or stereotypical viewpoint to such and such thinker, and, for instance, there are other interpretations of the

writings and works of Marx, Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, Husserl, and others that are more defensible and that are immune to the assault of such and such criticism (in other words, that I have had the same kind of confrontation with, say, Marx or Heidegger that I had been accusing others of for years regarding the interpretation of Hegel). Though I acknowledge such a critic, such acts of adopting specific viewpoints are inevitable, especially in a work like this. In any case, the reader will find that they are not dealing with an interpretative work in its academic sense, and the author does not claim to be interpreting, and therefore, the purpose of the references and mentions is not to interpret the words of such and such thinker, nor even to glorify the standpoints of this book by citing them or by criticizing them. Referring to the names of authors, even when criticizing them, on the one hand, is a kind of paying homage to the name with which an idea has been associated in history, and, on the other hand, lessens the author's responsibility in stating the premises and explaining all the concepts from the basics, and sidesteps reinventing the wheel. However, I promise the audience that, in regards to argumentation, this work is written in such a manner that if all the names and references were removed from it, though it might add to its ambiguity, there would be no harm done to its argumentation process, and therefore the author advances his discussion independently: But referring to names is quite helpful both in terms of understanding standpoints and in terms of understanding criticisms, though I know that the characteristic of one-sidedness in interpretation, always threatens texts such as this, and I have tried to avoid it as much as I can — indeed an effort that is always insufficient. Regarding the referenced sources, it is also necessary to point out that this work, despite its up-to-date problematic, adopts a critical standpoint towards what today is called “up-to-dateness” in the extreme and academic sense of the word. Obviously, I have not read all the original books and articles, especially the recent ones, in all the discussed areas. This is not possible at all.

One of the reasons why thinkers adopt an atomistic mindset, which is also justified under the slogan of “professionalism”, is that they are caught in the trap of such an interpretation of “up-to-dateness”. The main issue is problematic, not information. Instead of emphasizing the quantity of “being up-to-date”, one should emphasize the quality of “being contemporary”. I had an initially personal concern that was associated with a civilizational-philosophical issue and I reformulated this crisis that I experienced with my mind, heart, and bone, around the idea of nihilism, under the influence of Nietzsche. Then I tried, similarly to my previous practices, to find pre-existing methods to overcome this crisis, firstly to appease myself and secondly to make it available to others through translation, teaching, and interpretation. I must sincerely admit that I personally could not find such an answer. I then naturally tried to create an answer that was at the very least satisfactory to myself. After I thought I had an understanding of the general proposal for the preliminaries and the conditions of possibility of this answer, I put it into writing and tried, as much as possible, to present my arguments in its defense, so that perhaps some part of it (even one sentence) would be helpful, convincing, or at least inspiring to others (even one person). My main professional focus before starting to write this text was modern Western philosophy (especially German idealism) and as a result, most of my references and indeed the foundation of the entire presented system are related to these works. My knowledge in other fields is “small and sufficient”, so I have made use of them in this system too as much as I could. Of course, familiarity with new ideas (not because of the principle of up-to-dateness, but rather because it enriches the possibilities of imagination in the realm of creating allegories) is quite important, but the point is for the author or their audience to deem it “sufficient” for a specific issue and purpose. For this reason, it is possible that some of the ideas that I attribute to this work, unbeknownst to me, have already been introduced before elsewhere and by

someone else or some other people; all the better! If any of the ideas that I consider the result of this work were introduced by someone else, I applaud them. If someone else has gone even a few steps further in expressing what I consider to be the innovations of this work, I applaud them even more. It is also necessary to point out that perhaps in more favorable circumstances, I could have turned this text into a project resulted from the collaboration of thinkers from different fields, but in the current circumstances (the dominance of exhausting, destructive, and passivizing relations in the intellectual sphere of society), I found myself forced to enter this perilous realm, in a sense, single-handedly. As a result, apart from the field of metaphysics, which has been where I live and breathe, in other fields, without specialized and extensive knowledge of them and especially of their latest achievements, I tried, to the best of my ability, to extend the consequences of my metaphysical idea (especially the theory of the system of allegories and the problematic of fighting) to other fields appropriately to them, because I think that every answer is a comprehensive answer. But I admit that generally, I have got as far as a brief, headline-like, and preliminary proposal of these consequences. Remember that this book is merely an index for a future fighting system. As a result, I hope to be able to amend these deficiencies as much as possible in the next editions of this volume and also in the next volumes of this system by more reflection and research, as well as by receiving the criticisms of the audience (whether destructive, constructive, hostile, or sympathetic); however, my greater hope is that I will not be the author of all its volumes and that there will be others who have a common problematic but are more capable than me, who will use their wisdom, commitment, and imagination to work on creating other parts of the system. Therefore, I must point out that I hope that if a physicist, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of physics, if a theologian, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of religion, if a moral philosopher,

within the discussions that I have presented in the field of morality, if a political philosopher, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of political philosophy, if a logician, within the discussions that I have presented in the field of logic and so on and so forth, found a new and effective idea and had the possibility to expand and cultivate that idea, even despite their critical attitude towards the inadequacy of my claims and my explanation method, in continuing the path, they themselves would undertake, firstly, expanding the depth and width of the topics, secondly, making abstract ideas concrete, thirdly, rectifying some flaws caused by the shortcoming of my knowledge in that field and criticizing the inadequacies in the text, and finally, creating and reformulating that idea in that specific field.

We also know that every system can easily become dogmatic. However, rather than the system itself, this hinges on the manner people confront and confiscate it. History is full of stories of progressive ideas that led to dogmatic disastrous consequences, labor camps, and the justification of torture and oppression. It is as if the human masses desire to destroy every radical and progressive idea under the weight of power relations and self-interest, and what better way than to accept that idea, turn it into rituals, and distort it from within. Though every deviation also has its roots in a weak spot of the system itself or some corner of the system where it has surrendered. A potential or a possibility of surrendering that at first glance is probably overlooked by its founder. There is no guarantee that an emancipatory conceptual or practical system will not become some kind of oppressive and reactionary new monster. One can only embed automatic anti-confiscation engines in the heart of the system as much as possible. This is what I tried to do in this system as much as I could so that this system, as much as possible, as, at the very least, a hope for fighting, would not tomorrow be distorted and once again turn into a tool against fighting and an excuse for oppressing awareness and meaningful living in the hands of

biased confiscators or naive and unprepared believers or opportunistic sectarians.

I could also point out as an introduction that this work is actually two works, and I decided to include both in one book due to some considerations. One, presenting “the theory of the systems of allegories” and showing the imaginational-allegorical function of any form of human cognition (whether religious, scientific, philosophical, etc.) and dividing them into justified (becoming/making justified) and unjustified (becoming/making unjustified) and stating the characteristics of each; and the other, an outline of a suggested justified system of allegories, which I have depicted both on the metaphysical and theoretical level and on the practical level as comprehensively and cohesively as possible. In this sense, the first book is a general proposal of the theory of the systems of allegories, and the second book is a specific system of allegories based on fighting. I did not separate these two works from each other, though the audience themselves will notice their distinction.

Furthermore, I have to state again in the end my own recognition of the many weaknesses of this work which are associated with the material and historical conditions of the formation of this text. In an intellectual environment where no positive comprehensive philosophical system has been produced for almost four centuries, and in the poisonous intellectual atmosphere caused by an ineffective and disturbed academia (at least in the humanities), an unprecedented gap between the state and nation, general mistrust, as well as the prevalence of destructive psychological emotions and psychological emotions which induce passivity in the intellectual and scientific communities, and under the dominance of a kind of intellectual-historical self-deprecation and lack of self-confidence in “our” philosophical space (despite all the narcissistic and self-important nationalist (patriotic) or ideological (Islamist) gestures), any positive effort to create such an intellectual system is

not only faced with many individual, psychological, and social obstacles, but before even beginning, and even before being read, will be subject to biased attacks and rampant psychological reactions and various misunderstandings, especially in a society where in all its levels, “creating” is a vice. Though it matters not.

I know and acknowledge that this work is only one step of the process that I hope starts here and now and will be developed and expanded in a critical manner by subjects who are far more creative, capable, prepared, brave, free, and decisive. Therefore, this work, according to the logic that justifies it, is looking forward to any criticism at any level (even biased and malicious criticisms — because history has shown that even in these cases, after the dust of vilifications and retaliations settles, what remains will help improve and elevate the system).

The purpose of this work, as its title suggests, is to propose ideas and outline the main points and “principles” and the reader will recognize that each chapter has the potential to be expanded into a separate and independent work. I myself hope, after the publication of this first volume, to further develop some of these ideas, by preparing a preliminary treatise as an introduction to the second volume (the level of intersubjectivity), by completing the program of practices in the form of a book entitled “The Comprehensive System of Practices”, and also by presenting a second edition of this very text soon. But I hope even more that, before long, in this space, language, and culture, we will witness such quantitative and qualitative growth in the creation of multi-faceted systems of thought and practice that this present work, like a small sapling, will become lost amidst their dense garden. At first, I regarded this project simply as a personal answer to my confrontation with the nihilism I perceived. But now that it has entered the public sphere, I may express the hope that at least one reader (and all the better if more) will find in this work, even in

this preliminary form, the same possibilities that I discovered/constructed; and perhaps they may be more capable and creative than I am, and will advance it in a critical manner. Then I will merely have been a bridge for them.

Mohammad Mehdi Ardebili

Tehran, May 2022

Chapter 1. Fight, Desperation, and System

“Even if one’s head were to be suddenly cut off, he should be able to do one more action with certainty.”

(Yamamoto Tsunetomo, *Hagakure*¹²)

The window for fight

The above quote from *Hagakure* is a reminder of our nihilistic situation. Our head has been severed from our body, and there is no hope. If we have prepared ourselves to the utmost, perhaps in the remaining instant we can make just one move: for me, the fight is that move, and indeed the remaining instant(s), endlessly.

As noted in the introduction, if, because of meaninglessness, relativism, and the absence of any universal foundation, or in a word, the dominance of nihilism over every pillar of our thought and living, we are unable to defend our actions, can we not still regard the very effort, however unsuccessful, to confront this situation as itself defensible? Could it be that the only meaningful act in the age of meaninglessness is precisely the act of confronting or fighting with (or at the heart of) meaninglessness itself? Setting aside the serious questions about the meaning and function of this “fight”, what we can discern so far is that in the age of dominance of nihilism, and once we acknowledge that dominance, this text, and indeed any text or action, is meaningful so long as it declares its aim to

¹² Tsunetomo, Y. (2012). *Hagakure: The book of the samurai*. Shambhala Publications.

be a critical confrontation with this very situation, and a fight with (or at the heart of) it, and truly commits itself to that aim. Defeat is final only when the subject abandons the fight. This principle, though it still solves none of our problems, at least rescues our now from meaninglessness and renders this very resolve, the writing of these very pages, justified, even if in the end the proposal turns out to be a failed one. Yet, as admitted in the introduction and as will become clearer later, any naive effort undertaken in the name of fight (that is, the vast majority of activities on this planet that call themselves fight) is not only not fight, but in fact reinforces meaninglessness and undermines the value of life. What matters is that any fight plan must, at the very first step, clearly justify what it is fighting with and how. Any form of mere discharge of force out of sheer desperation, or any form of battle over the distribution of the objects of desire — even if fair — does not count as fight. But clinging to the very “idea of fight” can at least open a temporary window for meaningful reflection and breathing. So if I were to take a step beyond Adorno’s remark in *Minima Moralia* that “wrong life cannot be lived rightly”¹³, I would say: “Yes, it can”, but only on one condition: “by confronting and fighting with (or at the heart of) the wrong life itself”. But that is only the first step, for all fights against the wrong life are themselves organized within the framework of that same wrong life. Therefore, before we can ask about the nature of the true fight, we must begin with the question of whether (and why) fights become distorted (or have previously become so) and lead to the squandering of forces (or have led to so).

It should be noted that false fight (pseudo-fight) is even less justified than accepting defeat. Accepting defeat and absolute despair — like that moment on the threshold of suicide — may open possibilities in front of the subject, whereas pseudo-fight, by creating the illusion of fighting, both squanders the

¹³ Adorno, T. W. (2005). *Minima Moralia: Reflections from damaged life* (E. F. N. Jephcott, Trans.). Verso. (Original work published 1951). p. 39.

subjects' resolve and strength, and at the same time does not confront but evade the very despair born of nihilism, which is the precondition for true fight. In short, pseudo-fight is all fights that do not take the main problem (nihilism) as their main goal. Here I stress "main" (and not sole) issue, because the point is not to suspend or halt every other fight on this pretext, but rather to be able to place them under the umbrella of the main fight and thereby justify them. In other words, for example, the fight against political despotism should not be abandoned on the grounds that one is pursuing the radical fight over the meaning of life; yet that fight must raise its own aims beyond a naive conception of "freedom" understood merely as the satisfaction of desires (second teleological level) to a higher level. Thus, radical fight is, above all, a fight against the true forces that obstruct the existing situation, and all other fights become justified only through being related to radical fight. Though any individual or group that battles even one of the forces that obstruct the situation, provided they situate this partial battle in the light of the main one, are engaged in true fight and therefore are living meaningfully: So, behind all the dust and clamor of minor fights, what must always remain in view is the main problem; a problem that, as will be shown, is the most hidden and the hardest to grasp. But the point that is likely to be contentious is that radical fight, due to the metaphysical obstruction of the situation and the metaphysical roots of the crisis, must specifically begin from metaphysics itself, or at the very least, be accompanied by it from the outset. This is the point of departure for the true fight, otherwise, as recent experiences have repeatedly shown, fight turns into self-deception and consolations that, due to the agents' ignorance of their constitutive elements, remain superficial, ineffective, provisional, and ironically reproducing of the status quo. Thus, even if this claim may not be acceptable to readers, without resolving the question of criteria and foundations, "from this perspective", for instance the endurance of a political

activist under torture in prison is no different from a complacent person eating pizza in a restaurant, and neither is “in itself” in terms of axiology preferable to the other. As was mentioned, the intention is not to postpone other fights, but the essential point is that fight in the domain of metaphysics too must not be postponed under the pretext of rash action-obsession, nor even dismissed as futile. Likewise, the slogan of provisional originality of minor fights or “everyone according to their own capacity” has no real application here. Certainly, on the level of conventional politics or common criteria, one can deem the act of the political activist superior to eating pizza at a restaurant, but let us not forget that if we could rely on existing assumptions and criteria to issue such a judgment, there would have been no need to embark upon so arduous a path and so radical a fight, not against this or that stance, not even against this or that foundation, but against (or at the heart of) foundationlessness itself. Therefore, all the fights for securing the rights of a particular ethnic, gendered, or religious group from an oppressive society or authoritarian state, or the pursuit of freedom or justice (notwithstanding the endless debates over their definitions), which are mostly political, according to the assumptions of this text, unless they justify themselves based on justified foundations, are not only untrue fights, but even devoid of any value, and they emerge merely from the largely unaware drives of individuals or groups to satisfy their own interests and to secure the means of their survival and the means of satisfaction of desire. This is precisely the nihilistic condition from which this book begins. It must be repeated again, if a reader finds it difficult to accept this truth, that is, that either they are clear about their action, criteria, and foundations, or that at least they carry the capacity to make and defend judgments in some epistemological, political, and moral debates, then they should know from the outset that, they are, perhaps, far more fortunate than we are, and may well set this book aside, turn to their own goals and criteria, and justify their life and action on that basis.

Though the fight stance of this work will later enter into a justified dialogue with such a reader and will direct its critiques against their position; yet, from the very beginning, they are not co-problematic with this work, and thus, not its specific audience.

Positive fight

The most significant misunderstanding about the meaning of fight is reducing it to its negative aspect. The first meaning that comes to mind when we hear the word fight, is fight against an established power in order to weaken or destroy it. The negative aspect is, of course, part of fight; however, today, especially after the failure of the utopianist projects of the twentieth century, from Marxism to political Islam, this one-sided understanding has become increasingly dominant. Yet, on the contrary, what matters more in fight is its positive aspect. The negative aspect is justifiable only within the context of the positive one. This positive aspect has two forms: the unintended positive aspect and the intentional positive aspect. The unintended positive aspect is the result of an apparently merely negative act, without its agents intending it. It is obvious that every negating act has positive consequences; not only positive outcomes that come after its realization and victory, but even positive outcomes that simultaneously accompany the very act that is seemingly merely negative. Those who strive, in a clean-handed manner, to deny responsibility for the positive consequences of their action (whether they are negationists, such as anarchists, or neutralists, such as the passive clean-handed), always insist on negative (destructive) or neutral (inaction) action as the purest form of action, forgetting that every act, even inaction, regardless of its negative, neutral, or positive intentionality, ontologically carries precisely the same amount of positive consequences, and morally-politically is responsible for the situation.

But insofar as the present discussion is concerned, the true fight in the age of nihilism, is fundamentally a positive fight, because nihilism itself is the result of absolute negation attaining positivity. In this sense, all previous negative fights, even the justified ones, have been fights that contributed to the realization of this nihilism. Every fight that has collapsed structures, systems, and solemnities has participated in the current foundationlessness and lack of criteria. This, of course, in no way amounts to endorsing the reactionary or nostalgic stance about the loss of former criteria. “What is falling, should be pushed.” As seen in the above, nihilism is merely the result of the disclosure of the foundationlessness of all former foundations. In this sense, although the radical fight targets nihilism (and below we will consider precisely what this targeting means), it also sees itself as grateful to and indebted to it. Nihilism is the result of the realization and emergence of a certain freeing awareness. The fight with (or at the heart of) nihilism does not seek a return to the past, rather, it actually aims to radicalize that destructive awareness itself so as to bring about a positive destruction of the negative destruction itself, or to move beyond the obstruction that nihilism has presented as the final destination. The present work is not an attempt to construct a new foundation that would be safe from nihilism’s reach, but to create a new foundation that arises from the heart of nihilistic foundationlessness as its logical result. Thus the claim that the present fight considers itself indebted to nihilism means that nihilism (though as the necessary result of the collapse of the Judeo-Greek civilizational myths) brought about the opportunity for the previously “hidden” collapsibility of those foundations, to become “revealed”. Now it is time for the hidden collapsibility of that very revelation itself to be revealed; otherwise, the tale of the collapse and terror is no longer news today. For more than a century this collapse has appeared most vividly in forms of philosophy, art, literature, and so on, yet because that appearance was not accompanied by some

comprehensive justified positive alternative, it has in practice produced not heightened sensitivity and fight-related activities, but deeper passivity, indifference, and self-forgetfulness. Therefore our goal is no longer to show merely what has collapsed, as contemporary negational approaches do (from Nietzsche to Derrida). That goal is, of course, justified, but since, at least in the present work, trying to make “the one who has not yet heard the terrible tidings” into our audience would waste most of our force, and even then it perhaps would not bear fruit, we assume the specific audience of this text to be the subject who has at least already, in heart and soul, heard and tasted the terrible tidings. Radical fight has a goal beyond demonstrating the collapse: it aims to collapse the very collapse itself (on the subjective level and in both its negative and positive senses) and, as a result, to create a new and justified positivity (on the objective/intersubjective level).

So although this fight takes aim at nihilism, in its very first step it not only accepts nihilism but even appreciates it and takes responsibility for its necessity. Yet, even in this deeper sense, the fight is to respond positively to the obstruction’s agents. The radical fighter is to, when everything has collapsed, create something in an aware and dutiful manner; and if the fighter’s agency is negating, it is to find a positive character when confronting the dominant negation, as I have written in *The Projections of Philosophy*, they are to “destroy destruction itself”, and thereby engage in creation. In the introduction, we presented the negative aspect of this destruction: that is, the collapsing function of nihilism itself. And now, the goal is clear: a sublating reconstruction of the constitutive agents of nihilism or obstruction. For the establishment of this new edifice, metaphysics operates on two levels of agency: first, the architectonic blueprint of the structure, and second, the creation of a defensible foundation. (Though as we shall see, this foundation will be neither rigid and dogmatic nor formless and elastic, but plastic: for instance, earthquake-resistant buildings

are not those that remain immobile during an earthquake, but rather those that, because of their simultaneously flexible and resistant structure, do not collapse.) Only after the creation of such a foundation might it be possible to build upon it a new politics and a new morality. However this emphasis on positivity is not meant to dismiss or overlook the negative aspect, but rather to realize positivity despite the acceptance and internalization of negation. How this is to be achieved must first be formulated within the domain of methodology and logic, and then must establish its foundations in epistemology and metaphysics, the subjects of the following chapters. We have taken as our guiding principle Hegel's statement in paragraph five of the *Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit* that "the true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of that truth", though with a critical re-creation and opening of the very idea of "system", so as to create a new experience of system; here too we may claim, against the dominance of the negative interpretation of the meaning of fight and truth over the past two centuries, that "the true shape in which true fight exists, can only be the fight for the theoretical creation and practical realization of a kind of justified fight system." If one achieves this, only then can they talk of political fights as the objective and social results of a metaphysical idea, and only then can an act (whether moral or political) be justified.

But before the positive systematizing fight, which we will discuss later in this chapter under the heading "systematic/systematizing fight", it is necessary to remind that fight must begin with a kind of negation, though here we do not mean the negation of the enemy or the established system, we mean rather the negation of all pseudo-fights that claim to be fights while, in fact, not only are they wasting intellectual and bodily forces and energies, but they are also presenting a distorted and ineffectual form of fight, though disguised with seemingly radical slogans and appealing aesthetics, in place of true fight. The

condition for the possibility of any radical hope is to become disillusioned with all these illusory fight-related hopes, which, in practice, reproduce the status quo and, despite their militant pose, are fundamentally conservative.

The most striking example of this militant pose is blind political activism against an established system. It has become ingrained in people's minds that anyone who is for instance, supposedly, fighting against some despotic political system, regardless of the foundations that justify their action, is a hero. If such a person happens to be imprisoned or has spent some time in prison, they are turned into a legend; and if they lose their life in the process, they are regarded as a saintly martyr. Interestingly, those who, by adopting a relativistic and nihilistic stance, speak of the relativity of truth or the absence of any criterion, in these cases, simply because of the apparent cost that some political activist has paid, support them, regardless of the foundation or motivation of their action, and also regardless of their own foundation (or lack of), and call them a self-sacrificing fighter. I must note here that the cost a person pays has no connection at all to the justifiedness of their action. First of all, what justifies an action are its foundations and criteria, not the psychological or physical suffering of the individual. Those who, for instance, defend some prisoner merely because of the seemingly selfless cost they pay, would they be equally willing to defend a self-sacrificing suicide bomber of ISIS? Secondly, based on the dominant principle of self-interest, every human being acts according to their own motives and interests. If we set aside the issue of justificatory foundations, neither the prisoner's motives nor the jailer's are superior to the other in terms of axiology, they both pursue their own individual or collective interests: many a wronged prisoner who later became the most ruthless jailer themselves! The fact that the wishes of one side (the prisoner or the jailer) align with the wishes of how big a portion of the populace (whether a minority or a majority) has no bearing on the axiological justification of those wishes.

Analyzing these motives can at best only “explain” the causes of actions of “both sides”, but it cannot “justify” “either” of them. Thirdly, are not the valiant behaviors in the kinds of activities that society glorifies, such as risky political activism or moral zeal or self-sacrificial acts, or actions based on stories and legends from cultural sources, or above all, giving one’s life for a cause (political, moral, or otherwise), themselves manifestations of an ultimate inability to confront the meaninglessness of one’s own life or the prevailing nihilism? Am I not, through my uncritical self-sacrifice, in fact concealing the meaninglessness of my own action and life? Leaving aside the promises of post-death (whether the religious paradise, the irreligious utopia, or the posthumous social recognition as a secular form of realizing immortality), all of which undermine the very essence and purity of sacrifice, is not martyrdom-seeking merely a shortcut (like a kind of short circuit) for swiftly escaping the unhappy condition and brushing aside the problem? This is even more true of trivial less dangerous activities that soothe guilty consciences (from environmental activism to the common artistic and carnivalesque protests). In light of the discussions presented in the first section, all of these are but caricatures of “fight”. Though after presenting the critiques against these pseudo-fights, the reader will realize that the present text, in certain respects, regards the activists in these fields as more capable than others of associating with its own fight problematic. In this sense, the position of this text toward them is not polemical (in the sense of denying all their achievements and even intentions and goals); rather, it is an invitation, not only to temporary strategic collaborations with this intellectual and practical system concerning this or that specific mutual intellectual, political, or social activity, but also to a profound and critical rethinking of the foundations of their own very practices. In such a case, through utterly comprehending nihilism and experiencing the disillusionment regarding their goals and activities in their current forms, they will find the

possibility and opportunity to redirect the strength, creativity, and commitment they expend in pseudo-fights or low-impact activities, toward the more radical and effective path of true fight, and perhaps even to take steps toward enriching and critically justifying this very system. In this regard, this system considers itself open to the most radical critiques on the basis of this problematic. In the various chapters of this work, we have formulated and proposed the justified conditions under which such a dialogue could happen.

A critique that could be raised against the position of this text right from the outset is this: “Doesn’t such a negative and radical stance lead us to political passivity?” Before defending our approach as not being passive, it is necessary to point out that the accusation that some metaphysical thought or approach is wrong merely because it results in political inactivity, is unfounded and fallacious. A metaphysical thought must be critiqued not in terms of its political consequences, but from a strictly metaphysical perspective, since those very political consequences themselves depend on such foundations to be judged. To criticize an entire metaphysical thought on the basis of its political consequences is a kind of fallacy and an escape to future, an attempt by the critic to avoid justifying their own thought. In short, if a critic who presents themselves as a supporter of political action and as someone with a positive platform or idea, truly has defensible ideas, they must test the philosophical foundations of those ideas within the domain of metaphysics itself and use them to confront their opponents. Otherwise, their critique amounts merely to a deceitful fallacy. And many a blow have we suffered in our modern history from this rash, anti-foundational obsession with action! If a political activist believes that their activity is justified, they must be able to defend it. But if, in a naive manner, they believe that their very activity, in itself, takes precedence over justificatory foundations and therefore needs no justification, then they also have no right to critique any other activity or inactivity. Their position is a

thoroughly relativistic one. For example, if Adorno's or Derrida's thought leads, in practice, to passivity, this passivity is in fact more real, and even more political and active, than all the slogans and poses of the weapon-wielding active critics. Of course, one must go beyond the passivity of thinkers like Adorno and Derrida and reach a foundation for activity (which is the very aim of this writing); but before that, the deceptive critiques must be exposed. In other words, when you have no justifying principle for action, how can you even prefer activity to passivity? How can you know that your activity will not bring about consequences more disastrous than passivity? In fact, you must answer this question: if, in total darkness, you cannot see anything and the fear of an enemy's attack has seized you, what do you do? Do you throw aimless punches in the hope that, if an enemy attacks, one might land? Do you run in any direction you can? Though you might do this out of unawareness and the dominance of fear and thereby even have the illusion of activity, but what if the enemy does not attack? Have you not weakened yourself for a future enemy attack? Won't you injure one another? If you reply, "So because we do not see the enemy we should do nothing?" and reduce my critique to a passive stance, I will answer: yes; in times of fear, both doing nothing and flailing one's fists in the air and running around in circles are equally fruitless, but not equally pitiable. Even if there were no enemy at all, you would either kill yourself out of fear of death or send others to their death, or you would drain your own strength and that of others through exhaustion or dread, or probably both. Of course one should not throw punches blindly in the dark, but that does not necessarily amount to a defense of doing nothing. This situation itself demands finding a kind of third way: that is, to become able to, while staying aware and ready, remain vigilant in silence for decisive action; to sharpen one's ears; where the darkness is absolute, instead of staring repeatedly and straining the eyes, to close the eyes — because they are no longer effective — and to activate the ears,

activate the sense of smell, and with hands, feet, and fingers attentive and prepared for fight (or dance), live aware and ready and “vigilant”, for, in Malabou’s words, “‘To see (what is) coming’ [vigilance] denotes at once the visibility and the invisibility of whatever comes.... ‘To see (what is) coming’ [vigilance] thus means to see without seeing — await without awaiting — a future which is neither present to the gaze nor hidden from it.”¹⁴ In these circumstances vigilance is not a form of passivity, but the most active form of justified fight.

Though on the other hand, in the critique of passive positions too it must be said that if activity is not justified, passivity is not justified either. In other words, if we choose passivity because activity is unjustified, we have, in effect, deceived ourselves through that clichéd moral maxim which says, “if I don’t act, I won’t be held responsible.” Passivity itself is a kind of activity, both theoretically and in terms of its practical consequences. There is no blind spot immune from the critique of “action”. As mentioned before, standing still is itself movement and in some form influences the world and is influenced by it. In this sense, standing still and doing nothing is, practically, utterly not less of an act than doing anything else. In fact, there is no such thing as not acting. Even what is called passivity or inaction may only, from a certain perspective and under specific conditions, appear as inaction (that is, devoid of intention or effect), yet from other perspectives, it is precisely and exactly an action and therefore, one cannot justify being passive in order to evade responsibility for action. In short, not acting itself must always be regarded as an action, and it must be either attacked or defended. But then, when all the possibilities for justifying an action are obstructed, when both action and inaction are equally unjustified, what can one do?

¹⁴ Malabou, C. (2004). *The future of Hegel: Plasticity, temporality and dialectic* (L. During, Trans.). Routledge. p. 184.

Night moth and narrow door

It is night. The window is closed. A night moth is slamming itself against the glass, trying to reach the light of the lamp. What can it do? 1. Keep slamming itself against the glass; 2. cling to the glass and appreciate as much light as reaches it from that distance and be content with its situation; 3. abandon both the light and the glass, and accept that it will never reach the lamp. In none of these cases does the night moth reach the lamp. So how can it ever reach the lamp? In no way. For no matter how much strength it may have, it cannot open the window. This is the state of objective obstruction: the goal is clear, but the path to it is entirely obstructed. But now, what if there is no light at all? What if we do not even know whether what we are slamming ourselves against is a window, a wall, or a rock? Then what? This is our situation. The night moth, at least, sees a light, though the path to it is utterly obstructed. But we do not even know whether there is any light at all. And if there is, in which direction is it? From this point of view, we are both blinder and weaker than the night moth. But let us return to the previous question: what possibility is there for the night moth so that it could actually reach the lamp? One possibility is that it neither abandons the light, nor foolishly slams itself against the glass, nor makes a telos and virtue out of its weakness and distance. Rather, it must keep clinging to the glass, without much hope, holding the faint hope that perhaps, for a moment, someone inside might open the window slightly, allowing it to slip through that narrow path. Until the window opens, this effort seems utterly futile. Yet if the goal is the lamp, then this itself, regardless of whether the window ever opens or not, justifies the night moth's living. This refusal to give up and despite weakness keeping oneself aware and prepared, is one aspect of "active vigilance" for action. Thus, beyond all these, whether there is a lamp or not, whether the window opens or not, what makes the night moth's living

meaningful is not its possibility of success (which is unmeasurable and dependent on chance), but the very “active and creative vigilance” itself: a vigilance separated from the outcome, which, since it is not heteronomous — that is, since it is not teleologically oriented toward an external goal — and its aim is the very subject’s living, can therefore become one with meaningful action. Vigilance is neither passivity, nor aimless activity, nor even a retreat into one’s own fear. Vigilance is a kind of action based on principles rather than result. That is, protecting and realizing awareness and preparedness, regardless of whether, at some moment (perhaps even now), an external possibility opens or not, creating new opportunities. Perhaps there is no light at all, and no window either. Vigilance is a kind of hopefulness which relies on the subject, one that simultaneously acts against both heteronomous hope and resigned despair. Of course, “one could dispute examples.”¹⁵ But then, precisely because of the absence of the lamp, could it be that our situation is not more obstructed but more abundant and more fertile? In the age when all lamps are declared extinguished, in the age of despair and desperation, the very collapse of the heteronomous hope of finding and clinging to lamp, may itself lead to the creation of new possibilities, perhaps even new lamps: it is only in this sense that the night moth itself becomes lamp, becomes light and shines upon night and night moths: the night moth as the night lamp.

We have dedicated a separate chapter in this book to the teleology of fight, where further issues are addressed. However, for now and to avoid misunderstanding, we will briefly mention two points: first, “active vigilance” is not merely a passive waiting, but an action while waiting. In this sense, “vigilance” means the preservation and protecting of awareness and preparedness, and this very protecting can (and perhaps even must) encompass everything from proposing

¹⁵ Referring to and contradicting a Persian proverb that says, “one should not dispute examples.”

and creating epistemic ideas, to moral action, and even to radical political action. Second, and in this sense, through a teleological shift that is explained in detail in the corresponding chapter, telos acquires a different meaning: that is, contrary to the common understanding that conceives of telos as light, lamp, or some probable (or even improbable and impossible) salvation, in our situation, that is, where neither the telos is clear or even probable, nor the path to it is defined or traversable, the telos, that is, the true telos of fight, will be the meaning-giving vigilance itself. Fight itself is the telos. This shift leads to a revolution in teleology, one that stands against both projective utopianism (which devalues the present) and passive present-acceptance (which maintains the status quo). Vigilance is neither passive stillness nor unaware dynamism, rather, it simultaneously encompasses stillness and dynamism.

Furthermore, when we critique pseudo-fights, perhaps this objection to us may arise: in positive work, what need is there to negate other paths? Each approach can propose its own path without interfering with others. “There’s room for everyone.” Yet this too is indeed the result of the same nihilistic approach which, though it claims to uphold pluralistic relativism, ultimately fosters a dogmatic obstruction. The issue is that although this path strives to construct and justify its foundations, entering it is so arduous and its way so stony and impassable that the follower submits to it out of sheer desperation and necessity. If there existed a better and smoother way to make human action and life meaningful and to confront nihilism, why would the followers of this path, the first of whom is the author himself, not abandon this difficult path and take one of those easier and safer paths? The negation of other paths, justifies the hardship of passing through this “narrow door”.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction....

(Matthew 7:13, New International Version)

This path (fight in the age of nihilism) is a narrow door. And even beyond that, it is the acceptance of being “lampless” and “doorless”. For the problem, in fact, is not only the key, but the “door” itself: no possibility, no faint glimmer of light is in sight. Thus, whoever knows of a door (even a closed one) can at least hope that one day they can open it. As Attar puts it:

Wait by the locked door, surely, someone shall open it in time.
Your burden is light; mine heavy, my soul burns of bewilderment.
My path has neither beginning nor end; I hold no key, nor find a door.
(*The Conference of the Birds*, “The Seven Valleys”)

What is quite important, is understanding and acknowledging the state of “desperation”: desperation in politics, desperation in philosophy, desperation in morality, and so on. Only through this can such immense suffering and hardship be justified despite so little achievement. And if one asks, when all incentives, promises, lamps, and ideals have collapsed, what then motivates a fighter to embark on such a difficult path, my answer would be, at first, simultaneously negative and positive: this desperation itself. If one is truly desperate, one can no longer be content with any pre-given path. So, although this point may by now seem tedious from repetition throughout this text, it must be reminded repeatedly to avoid misunderstanding — if reminding is of any use — that if someone does not find themselves this desperate and they hold another key or know of an open and welcoming door, then why should they take the arduous and perhaps uncertain, disheartening path of opening unknown, and perhaps nonexistent, doors amid absolute obstruction? This path belongs to they who not only find themselves utterly defenseless, but have accepted defenselessness and homelessness as their destiny, they who stare straight into the eyes of nihilism and have no choice but this gamble: with this meager, uncertain achievement and such an arduous path ahead. In Dante’s words at the beginning of *Inferno*, Canto III: “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.” Thus, in

short, no hope remains in the existing solutions, and on the other hand, the urgency to escape the current condition is strongly felt as well. Though if one realizes that all other paths are truly closed and unjustified, then one understands that this narrow door, this needle's eye, is as vast as the remnant of all humanity's hope: an infinite nothing. It is like an immense universe that is to pass through the eye of a needle. And why not, if we can integrate bodily power, mental intelligence, and creativity into a synergistic fusion to pass through the narrow door. Or where there is no door at all, we ourselves must become a door narrower than ourselves, to pass through ourselves: through the human.

Another criticism that might be raised is that by accepting nihilism, we in fact enter from the very beginning into a game already lost, for we have already acknowledged the obstruction of nihilism in advance:

Firstly, the acceptance or acknowledgment of what is, is not a matter of choice but of necessity. Nihilism is our pre-given condition. If the seemingly rival approaches were capable of transcending it, or circumventing it, we would not be witnessing such a state today. "Nihilism represents a pathological transitional stage... whether the productive forces are not yet strong enough, or whether decadence still hesitates and has not yet invented its remedies."¹⁶ The dogmatic way of confronting a problem always casts the enemy as the "absolute Other". Whenever the question of fight arises, one inevitably asks: with whom? Who is the enemy? The important issue is that most answers are misleading: some government, some economic system, some authoritarian dictator, the people, ideology, religion, fascism, or even nihilism itself. All these agents are outcomes of the necessity of the world and none possess will or agency of their own. If there is an enemy, that is, the agent of all these, it is indeed the necessity

¹⁶ Nietzsche, F. (1968). *The will to power* (W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.; W. Kaufmann, Ed.). Vintage Books. p. 14.

of the world itself. The very necessity that has constituted us. If the enemy is necessity, then who is the friend? Is it not necessity itself? The paradox facing the politics of truth: friend and enemy are one and the same, not even on two levels.

Secondly, in his attempt to confront Hume's skeptical challenges, Kant, instead of dogmatically rejecting his opponent, chose to "digest" and internalize those challenges, turning them into his own driving force. So much so that, in the preface to the *Prolegomena*, he wrote, in terms reminiscent of Hegelian dialectical confrontation, that "the remembrance [warning] of David Hume was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber."¹⁷ The point is precisely this: it is not the soothing lullaby of a friend (in the usual positive sense), but rather the jarring assault of an enemy (in the usual sense) that can awaken us from sleep. In the same vein, the confrontation with nihilism must begin by fully accepting its negativity. Only then can its "sublation" become possible. In short, although doubt regarding our foundations and presuppositions would occasionally disturb our slumber briefly throughout history, now the complete dominance of this foundationlessness, that is, nihilism, has also awakened some subjects from the blissful dogmatic sleep they once inhabited, and it is only for these sleepless ones that this "fight", not as an attempt to return to sleep, but as an attempt to live wakefulness itself and to accept its responsibility, has become justified and possible. And of course, we know that only those who are asleep can be awakened, not those who pretend to be asleep.

Thirdly, in battle, if you try to repel an opponent's blow who is stronger than you with equal force, you will be badly hurt while they will be only slightly hurt.

¹⁷ Kant, I. (2004). *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics: That will be able to come forward as science — With selections from the Critique of Pure Reason* (G. Hatfield, Ed. & Trans.; rev. ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 10.

If you stand your ground and simply neutralize the blow, you will be hurt less but they will not be hurt at all. Yet some martial arts (for example, tai chi) teach that if you fully accept the blow and return the opponent's force to them as if from within themselves, you will not be hurt, while the friend/enemy will be struck, by their own force, as if from within themselves mediated by the fighting subject. A similar technique must be used in confronting nihilism as well. Accepting the blow (acknowledging nihilism) is the point of departure. Without that the fight does not even begin. Especially when human is so weak and lacks a force of their own, one must only make use of the force of the situation itself. A blow received from the other's hostility must be transformed into a gift from them; and the gift must be returned to the center of the crisis. In martial arts finding the opponent's center of gravity is crucial. One must return the blow to the center, otherwise all energies are wasted and the opponent remains standing. What is needed here is a fight logic capable of translating these fight experiences first at the level of foundations, into the language of logic and metaphysics, and help create new methods of thinking. In this sense fight is a kind of creating. Only after that can these methods be applied in the political and moral realms. Though in the above I have still inevitably relied on a conventional, superficial notion of the "enemy". This issue requires building new causal foundations, which is discussed under the heading Radical causality in the chapter of Ontology, and is elaborated in detail under the heading Discerning the enemy in the chapter of Political subject.

Now that the narrow door and the new path have been mentioned, the question arises that in the age of obstruction, when all paths have been taken and have failed, how can a new path be found? Or even further, in Catherine Malabou's

words, “how can one be an absolute newcomer, when there is no outside, no ‘elsewhere’?”¹⁸

Seeker and finder

There is a Persian proverb that says, “The seeker is the finder” (or, in Rumi’s words, “In the end, the seeker will be the finder”). Yet a seeker can only be a finder when what they seek already exists. If the object of the search does not exist at all, the seeker cannot find it. But what if we go a step further? If the seeker is truly a “seeker”, then even if they find nothing, they themselves become a “creator”. This is especially true regarding the meaning of life and the creation of system of allegories. In fight truth and meaning cannot be found, they must be made. Contrary to the realist belief, meaning is not something findable at all. In this sense, the philosopher is a creator. Yet they must first be impregnated by what *is*, thus they are also a finder, before creating. They seek that which will impregnate them, so that, contrary to the claim of their martyred myth in the *Theaetetus*, they may give birth themselves. Now, the question that arises here is this: in this fight, what role can the individual, that is, a single person, play? While the world and all its structures surround them, and their problem is a civilizational problem, and while they themselves have derived everything they possess (whether acquired or innate) from the very condition they now stand against, what, then, can the individual do? Is fight in this realm anything more than an illusion? In contrast to the extreme individualism born of the Enlightenment, or even the approaches centered on personal happiness, there emerged the communitarian and holistic stance that viewed the individual only within the whole and did not hold them in particularly high regard as an

¹⁸ Malabou, C. (2022). *Prelude to the Persian translation*. In C. Malabou, *The future of Hegel: Plasticity, temporality, and dialectic* (S. Taghvayi Abrishami & M. M. Ardebili, Trans.; pp. 11–16). Tehran, Iran: Ney Publishing. (In Persian). p. 15.

individual. Hegel writes in the final paragraph of the *Preface to The Phenomenology of Spirit*: “...the share in the total work of spirit which falls to the activity of any individual can only be very small. As the nature of science implies, the individual must thus all the more forget himself; namely, although he must become what he can and must do what he can, there is nonetheless even less which must be demanded of him, just as he in turn must both anticipate less for himself and may demand less for himself.”¹⁹

This criticism is of course valid, but only against essentialist individualism. Yet if we understand the individual as a focal point of forces, a monad that represents the whole world, then each singular individual, is a universal individual. This Hegelian formulation is, to the extent that it defines the individual on the basis of the whole, a holistic approach. But if we read the formulation from its other side as well, then by emphasizing the position of the individual, each singular individual, themselves, is a universal individual: in a word, both because they are a condensation of their world (synchronic) and because they are the condensation of the history that has given them existence (diachronic). The individual must be able to be the whole, and to assume responsibility for the whole. Thus, in this sense, an individual can indeed have an exceptional impact, but not because that individual is more than an individual, rather, because in quantitative terms it is smaller than the liberal-atomistic definition of the individual. The subject is, in one sense, nothing, compared with quantitative, extensive, and finite things. But precisely because they are nothing, they can, through a radical turn (which is explained across various chapters of this work), be the manifestation of infinity. Had they been “something”, they would always have remained finite. So yes, an individual can be the condensation of the forces of a civilization. Not only an individual, but

¹⁹ Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *The phenomenology of spirit* (T. Pinkard, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press. p. 45–46.

even an individual work. In one sense: all works and all individuals, all names. Which name(s) come to stand out and play such a role depends not only on the creative power of the individual, but is also the result of fortune (in Machiavelli's sense, which of course differs from the Machiavellian sense) and where the civilization itself places the forces. Further still, which name finds the possibility to perform a radical action against the situation and change the game and negate the current situation, also depends on where the current situation itself places the forces. Without a plastic understanding of a situation, grasping this behavior of civilization and its relation to the individual is impossible.

Whether an individual can, insofar as fortune has concentrated the forces within them, become a history maker and bear the responsibility of history and of the whole spirit, depends on what the other forces do with them, and, of course, on the extent to which they themselves (being nothing and everything) accept this responsibility with awareness and preparedness. This acceptance is not merely a mental or psychological issue, but specifically concerns an objective capacity that is moral-political. Moreover, what has the highest priority in fight is not the final outcome, but the individual's effort to bring their capacity to its utmost and to strike in the right "direction". If any success can be attributed to the fight, it is neither the defeat of the "enemy!" nor even the realization of ultimate goals, but rather doing justified action. An action with one foot in singular individuality and the other in universal individuality: In this sense, the individual is simultaneously big and small.

The big and the small

Each of us is small and big; simultaneously. We are small before the world and the cosmos; we are nothing. In the face of the dimensions of the cosmos, my quantitative size is negligible, in the face of cosmic time, my lifespan is

negligible. Understanding this nothingness is the beginning of wisdom. But we also know that this nothingness is not entirely nothing, for the whole cosmos, with all its vastness, is made up of countless beings who are each more or less just as nothing and not nothing. If we consider ourselves absolutely nothing, we must also consider the cosmos nothing. This is the nihilism that the mystical ideal of “annihilation of the self”²⁰ attempts to conceal. The moment individuals are annihilated in God, it is, in fact, God himself who becomes annihilated. If we deem ourselves nothing in God, we must deem God nothing as well.

And yet, existence is vast and infinite. Therefore, we (as countless negligibles) are vast and infinite. Not as a mere algebraic sum, but as an intrinsic, infinite essence. If we see ourselves as overly big, so much so that we make other things small or assume them as nothing (that is, the common attitude), then we fall prey to an illusion about ourselves, not only because we have imagined ourselves big, but also because we have simultaneously made ourselves small. For by making ourselves big, by placing ourselves at the center, we have in fact made our world small, and it is for exactly this reason that we have made ourselves small. On the other hand, if we imagine ourselves so small that we are nothing before the cosmos, we again fall into an illusion, this time an illusion concerning the cosmos itself: the illusion of existence without existent beings, which is another name for nonexistent existence.

We are small and big simultaneously. This simultaneity is neither a neutral pluralistic reconciliation, nor a dialectical synthesizing sublation. This simultaneity resists both divergence and dissolution. We will explain this simultaneity in the next chapter (logic and methodology). At every moment we must know that, in the face of the cosmos, we are small and at the same time big. Continuously perceiving this simultaneity is wise awareness. This

²⁰ Fana

awareness makes us courageous and responsible simultaneously. Courageous because we are small and have nothing to lose (and at any moment our death will come, like the death of a mosquito), and responsible because, though we are small, we are responsible for the whole grandeur of the world, since the world itself both constitutes us and is constituted by us, that is, it is nothing but the world of the infinitely small.

On the other hand, the individual must be aware of this simultaneous bigness and smallness of themselves. This awareness of the simultaneity is the condition for big births. In other words, the condition for a big birth, is to bring both self-acknowledgement and self-negation to their extreme simultaneously. Each, without the other, leads to the miscarriage of the embryo before birth. Self-acknowledgement in the extremity of one-sidedness: paranoid solitude, the delusion of virginal pregnancy. Self-negation in the extremity of one-sidedness: paranoid dissolution, the delusion of barrenness. But self-acknowledgement, if accompanied by self-negation, is the appreciation for the capacities the world has concentrated into the individual; and self-negation, if accompanied by self-acknowledgement, constantly reminds the person of their limits and proportions. The true confrontation with the inflated delusional ego is possible not through negating the ego, but only by radicalizing the “I” and driving it to its furthest limits. In other words, the “I” must become as inflated as possible so that one can overcome it, or so that it can overcome itself. If the “I” is not big, overcoming it is not valuable much, and the “I” is not strong enough to overcome itself. The widespread so-called moral doctrine of “denying the ego” or “denying the selfhood”, at least in its common meaning, which humbly plays the self down and deems it insignificant, makes it impossible to overcome the self. If we weaken the I to make it overcomable, it will lose to that same degree its strength to overcome itself, and the I will be forced to delegate it, in a heteronomous manner, to others. Indeed, only at the

height of self-esteem and friendship with the self(s) is there any hope of sublation of the self, on the condition, of course, that the next step is taken critically and one does not fall into false self-importance. A very crucial point to mention here is that one must be able to draw an essential distinction between the subject and the ego: The subject has the possibility of becoming free (and even, in the sense intended in this text, is the only possibility of freedom), whereas the ego (as a configuration or mechanism of greedy possessiveness, carefreeness, self-importance, and selfishness) is fundamentally a slave (a slave to external/internal agents, whether biological, genetic, psychological, natural, cultural, and so on). Understanding this distinction and accepting responsibility for it, is a turning point in fight (a fight simultaneously against the external/internal agents that enslave, to free the self-world). The possibility of salvation and deliverance of the “I” becomes attainable only at the peak of the “I” and indeed, the hardest task is to battle with the I at its peak: The most difficult stage of fight, is fight against the self: the fight of the I at the heart of ego, the fight of the free subject at the heart of the enslaved-enslaving ego. In a word, it is not through negating the ego as the other-enemy, but from the heart of the constant and unending critical polishing of the ego itself as the subject’s home and foundation, that the free subject will emerge and will be liberated and will liberate.

Though like iron your form is dim and tarnished
polish, polish, polish²¹

This issue manifests itself more tangibly in the simultaneous preservation of ambition and contentment. One must push both to their limits simultaneously. The more ambitious, the more content. Immature common sense fails to grasp this idea. But the one who creates knows that they must be content and

²¹ Rumi, J. (n.d.). *Masnavi-ye Ma’navi, Book IV [Spiritual Couplets, Book IV]*. (In Persian).

ambitious simultaneously, wanting the most while being content with the least. Or: “Want the most while knowing you will lose even the least.” Or even: “Want the most while knowing that the most is, itself, the least.” This is one of the key points in **empowering the subject**. Fight is the ability to cultivate and reconcile these two irreconcilables (from the perspective of the conventional two-valued logic) within the subject.

The simultaneous emphasis on the aforementioned dualities (bigness and smallness, self-love and self-negation, ambition and contentment, and so on) is crucial. This simultaneity must be fundamental-logical, not superficial-performative. The fighter must be content precisely at the peak of their ambition, otherwise, the smallest incident will dishearten them, and likewise they must be ambitious at the peak of their contentment, otherwise, they will settle for too little and lack the strength and motivation for big endeavors. This simultaneity is by no means a moderation between these two traits, rather, it radicalizes both critically: if the Aristotelian Golden Mean is “good”, fight is doubled “evil”.

The key is deeming everything you possess (your body, thoughts, property, relationships, emotions, future, and even your life) worthless, while at the same time committing yourself with full force to whatever you do. You must perform every task as if it were the most valuable thing in the world, though simultaneously it is absolutely valueless in itself. This is the law of fight in the age of nihilism. Otherwise, you will either abandon the fight or dogmatically ignore nihilism. It is here that the true fighter can accept their destiny, and even wish to be destiny itself: the destiny of a generation, or even the destiny of humanity.

Being destiny, against the promise of the savior

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche has a chapter titled Why I am a destiny. Certainly, the vast majority of readers, and probably all of his contemporaries, mocked this phrase and took him for a narcissistic madman. That he was indeed mad and narcissistic is beyond doubt, but did he not in fact become a destiny? A destiny that we are still living. A destiny that is still the destiny of all of us. Nietzsche's creative power made him a destiny. Every creative fighter today must ask themselves: "How can one become a destiny?"

The answer is this: through creative power, intensity, and of course luck, by maintaining awareness, preparedness, and decisiveness. But more important than all these, through an absolute will: the will to become a destiny; that is, while accepting being nothing, not being content with anything less than "becoming a destiny". It means having the courage to accept the heavy and frightening responsibility of being a destiny: "Now that I am a destiny, what must I do?" Here, the emphasis is less on the future and more on the now. This "being a destiny" acts precisely against the idea of the promise of a "savior". For today, it is no longer a real challenge to be a Zarathustra, or even a Christ. Every promiser must fall silent. Every promiser lies. Every promiser hides their failure, ignorance, impotence. A law of fight: either be yourself the destiny you promise, or shut up.

Believe only the promise that deems the moment of salvation, the very "now". The only true savior is the one who has already saved. And if there is truly a savior on the way, what need is there for promise and prophecy? A promiser, even if they are telling the truth, is a fraud. Our ears are filled with promises; do not add another promise to the pile. No longer believe any promise of a savior. The world is full of promises from those who foretell the coming of a savior in the future. More deceitful still are those who first call themselves the savior, but in the end they too make promises of a savior, or, in the most ridiculous form: promises of their own return. A savior who makes promises is no savior. If one

is truly a savior, one must save in that very instant. A fighter does not promise, a fighter creates: new paths, new values, even new criteria: Instead of promising reaching the lamp, shine now yourself.

The condition of any true and radical fight, is not to move along pre-given paths, but to challenge the paths themselves. Yet, as already noted, fight is not merely negative but also positive. In other words, if a path is being destroyed, one must in the same moment keep an eye toward constructing a “new” path. When not only the paths lose their value, not only the values lose their meaning, but even the criteria become unacceptable, one must forge new criteria. But this is an immensely formidable task. If a criterion is new, how and by what criterion is it to justify itself? None! For this very reason, every form of radical rethinking of criteria and criteria-making will rightly be regarded as a kind of madness. A generative madness accompanied by the gamble that perhaps (a very unlikely perhaps) it may shape and determine the path of the rationality of tomorrow, becoming a criterion for those who come after, and thus, for those who came before! One cannot escape the paradox that creating any form of rational criterion is, in the highest degree, an irrational act.

Decision: precondition for fight’s possibility

This is where we must once again speak of the audience of this text. The audience of this text is precisely the one who is capable of entering the fight. This audience has two characteristics: first, they are someone who understands meaning (I deliberately did not write “human”, because “being one who understands meaning” and “being human” overlap only partially; this holds under any definition we may have of the human). That is, they can understand this text (whether by reading or hearing it, whether directly in Persian or through translation). Second, nihilism and the exit from it are a problematic for

them. That is, they not only experience some level of dissatisfaction with the situation, but they do not seek the resolution of this dissatisfaction in the conventional, mediocre, and trivial wishes that aim to satisfy some desire or realize some telos. Rather, they have truly reached a kind of radical hopelessness and absolute desperation: They must have lost hope not only in every form of hope, but even in hopelessness itself. Thus, there is no naive illusion here of “all humanity” or “all beings”: although every human can potentially possess these two conditions, we are, in the most optimistic scenario, dealing with a kind of minority intersubjectivity. For me, even a single person is enough: One subject is themselves a world (in the sense that intersubjectivity is present at the heart of the subject). Such an audience is a being of desire who seeks to transcend desire: one who finds living solely according to the cycle of pleasure and pain, that is, according to preconstructed natural, divine, or civilizational teloses, insufficient, and who is searching for some other “value” and “meaning” for their life. Such a person must stand against all three telos-making sources: nature, God, and human. Against nature, because nature has no meaning in advance, and any act of meaning-giving is a kind of transcending “merely natural beings”; against God, because although God gives meaning, the history of God is the history of heteronomous meaning-giving, and in a word, the history of projecting human responsibility onto the heavens; and finally against human, because human, as the creator of God, nature, and civilization, is not only responsible for the present situation but has, in every creed and worldview, lived solely according to the principle of survival and desire (that is, the increase of pleasure and the decrease of pain).

Though the majority of this text’s actual audience consists of the audience who has the capacity for the initial understanding but has no wish to transcend (or, even if they initially believe they possess such a wish, once confronted with its terrifying dimensions, they oppose it). It is evident that this text is not the only

possible form of transcending, and one could likely “create” other kinds of transcendence. Thus, if an understanding being finds themselves co-problematic with this work, but does not agree with its positive system, neither they nor this writing are at fault in this respect. They must create their own answer, and in doing so, they might even gain a small benefit from this work or even shed some light on it, and later engage with it critically in dialogue. In this sense, regardless of the constructedness of the subject, regardless of all the external cultural, historical, and biological conditions that constitute and induce a choice, and regardless of the absence of equal natural-civilizational conditions for different individuals, the precondition of the possibility of fight is a “decision”: a decision to live a meaningful and justified life beyond the cycle of desire, and to pay the price of this decision, while accepting nihilism (that is, accepting that every existing form of justifiedness and meaningfulness is questionable). This point protects us from many of the initial false disputes with the non-audience of this text.

Against criticisms of “the meaning of life”

One might raise the objection here: why shouldn't our life simply be to “float in the enchantment of the rose”?²² Why seek a meaning (or a new meaning) for life at all? Is life itself lacking something? Is life not itself the telos? What need is there to find/create meaning? Why do you consider life so valueless that you feel compelled to attach a meaning to it?

Firstly, one of the most important tasks of fight in our present age is precisely to expose the deception hidden behind this very stance. If life itself is immediately sufficient, if there is truly no need for meaning or concept, then it

²² Sepehri, S. (2020). *Hasht Ketab [Eight books]*. Negah Publishing. (In Persian).

cannot connect to the universal, therefore, one cannot speak of any good or bad, and consequently, no action can be praised or condemned. Further still, one cannot even begin to speak, because the moment one speaks about anything (life, beauty, meaning, value, good, evil, etc.), the issues of meaning and the universal immediately arise. Thus, the advocates of this approach cannot justify, recommend, or even express and describe even their own acceptance, presence in the moment, joy, pleasure, or tranquility. They cannot affirm or deny anything. Without criteria, without meaning and concept, their words can only be sincere if they say nothing at all, take no stance, and dwell in a kind of vegetative-prelinguistic immediacy with nature — and they cannot even do that. Do they truly have the courage to admit that all their claims about beauty and goodness, tranquility and joy, are hypocritical? For all these notions have a universal character. Anyone who pursues any ideal (such as tranquility, liberation, happiness, beauty, etc.) must appeal to criteria and meaning. Of course, everyone is entitled, even in the privacy of their own heart, to imagine that they have attained immediate happiness and to delight in it. Good for them!

Secondly, it can be shown that these criticisms themselves presuppose a universal criterion of happiness based on increasing pleasure and decreasing pain. This is not erroneous in itself, so long as it is not idealized uncritically, or presented as self-evident without explanation. Otherwise, in one sense, other animals too, after the priority of survival and reproduction, follow the very same principle.

But if one asks what it means to make life meaningful, the answer can be given on two levels. Firstly, the negative answer: namely, refusing to submit to the predetermined paths laid out by primary and secondary nature: the possibility of creating morality in the face of physics. Making life meaningful seeks the source of value outside the natural instincts of survival and reproduction and the mere desire to increase pleasure and decrease pain. Secondly, the positive

answer: making life meaningful means finding or creating a source that gives value to life beyond blind natural reactions or civilizational clichés (that is, the principle of survival and desire). Later we will criticize in detail all existing meaning-giving approaches, but insofar as this principle itself is concerned, it may be briefly noted that here the concept of value has a dual sense. A negative one: refusing to submit to blind instinctual meaninglessness; and a positive one: in the sense of creating a new, justified form of valuation. In this sense, the fight is a way of living that is meaning-giving/meaningful and valuating/valuable. We will return to this issue in the chapter of Teleology.

The issue of fear

“Hence, fear is the root from which superstition is born, maintained and nourished.”
(Spinoza, *Theological-political treatise*²³)

But one of the first obstacles on the path of fight, especially a fight this radical, is fear. What should the fighter do with their fear? A common solution is to ignore it. The slogan “Don’t be afraid and move forward”, in the superficial sense in which it is often invoked, is the flip side of “Do not be aware of your fears” and forget them or ignore them. On the contrary, fear must not be ignored; rather, one must make precisely and specifically fear itself, the feeling of fear itself, the very process through which fear grows, the object of observation and awareness. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the disabling of fear’s agency through the aware observing and accepting of it. Overcoming fear without awareness is nothing but foolishness and recklessness. This issue has been given a separate practice in the advanced preparedness section of

²³ Spinoza, B. (1670/2007). *Theological-political treatise* (M. Silverthorne & J. Israel, Trans.; J. I. Israel, Ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 4.

Comprehensive system of practices (alongside the two endurance practices of “pain” and “coldness”). When fear becomes dominant, of course one must confront it, but not through ignoring or forgetting, on the contrary, through observing fear itself. This awareness disables fear’s agency at three levels: First, observing fear itself, although likely at the beginning, like any precise observation, intensifies anxiety and makes the experience seem unbearable, ultimately leads to the subject’s acceptance, an awareness of the nature of fear, and thus its reduction (the point is that disabling fear’s agency does not mean shrinking or destroying fear, but the subject becoming bigger and more solemn, so that they can fully digest and sublimate fear within themselves: The most courageous people always possess the deepest fears); second, awareness of the necessity of events (this awareness, unlike the previous awareness, does not arise from direct observation, but from mediated awareness of the nature of things); and third, a prior readiness for anything that may happen (this aspect concerns the subject’s preparation before and during the experience of fear): a perpetually prepared subject lives at the highest limits of their courage. Thus courage is neither fearlessness nor foolishness, but rather an openness to every experience in the path of a justified living. Only at the height of fear, if instead of trying to escape, we realize that there is nowhere to escape, does a level of awareness of ourselves and of things emerge and from within this awareness true courage is born.

The first fear that the fighter must tackle at the very beginning is the fear of death. The fear of death, as Epicurus also showed, is the mother of all fears. By overcoming the fear of death, one can take an effective step toward confronting other fears. Contrary to the common approach, the aim is not to end this fear through comforting and uplifting storytelling about life after death. Such an approach is an instance of overcoming fear through self-deception. The issue is not about the nature of death or what happens after it, rather, it concerns the

very nature of the “fear of death” itself and the constant observation of its agency. Death lies on the other side: beyond life and therefore, beyond cognition. Thus, we do not speak here of the nature of death: because we have no experience of it. For this reason, any narrative of “death itself” is illusory, especially the narratives of those who claim near-death experiences. The issue is not quantitative at all, so we cannot speak of nearness or distance. In the appendix of Practices to empower the subject, in the introduction to the “Death practice” section, we have critiqued these approaches.

Thus, death lies on the other side; but what lies on this side is our gaze upon death, which, in its rawest form, manifests as fear. There is an instinct within us not to die (conatus) which, in terms of value, as we shall show later, is neither good nor bad in itself, but, like any other matter for which there is no preference, must derive its meaning and worth at every moment from a justified source. In other words, staying alive is not, in itself, a priority of the fight. Whoever wishes to risk passing through this perilous path, must awarely not fear death and overcome the instinct for survival. This is by no means a defense of suicide: suicide too is rooted in fear, but it replaces fear of death with fear of life. Fight is a living that overshadows the fear of death: a living that is constantly at every moment prepared and vigilant. Bare mere life has no value, if life has any value, it is because it offers the possibility of meaningful living. “Neither hate death nor love it.” “In this regard”, the being-alive of five thousand people is not different from that of eight billion. Twenty years of life is not essentially different from eighty years. What matters is that we preserve our commitment to “fight in the now”. We must ask ourselves whether each moment is worth it. If it is, why? Otherwise, an unreflective and “without a why” life, in this forward flow of existence, is nothing but biology: neither a distinguished feat nor something of value. Here we must distinguish among the three levels of “staying alive”, “life”, and “living”; and, as the lines above suggest, we

attribute an active subjective dimension to living, a dimension that is absent in the two lower levels of mere bare biological staying alive, and mere conventional civilizational life.

Staying alive, if it has any value at all, does so because it may turn into an opportunity and a ground for meaningful living: that is, for fight. Free of greed and hatred directed toward the future, free of expectation, free of any need for collective validation. If you awarely overcome the fear of death, you can more easily conquer the smaller, secondary fears: the fear of death is the first step in confronting the broader set of “fear of loss”: the fear of losing loved ones, the fear of losing health and capability, the fear of losing this or that possession or attachment, the fear of losing reputation and social standing. In the appendix of practices, it is explained, very preliminarily, that to reach this stage, the subject must seek out everything they care about and are attached to, and awarely and through subtle techniques, prepare themselves for its loss. This is precisely an act contrary to the mythic slogan of our era that urges us to avoid “negative thoughts” and to turn ignorance and naivety into “positive thoughts or energy”. In fact, it is the acceptance of the experience of losses and deprivations that protects the subject when confronting the destructive emotions that arise from them. One must not forget that all human life will end in a short while, and that the extinction of humanity, and perhaps, shortly after, any form of life on Earth, will arrive. The sun, too, will likely go dark. After that, the movement of planets, systems, and galaxies will continue. To where? We do not know. Until when? We do not know. Why should we know at all? It is not even possible to know. What does it matter? If our concern is fight and meaningful living, none of these issues matter. The issue is: What am I to do with this very moment? In this sense, giving priority to, or taking too seriously, the progress of science concerning the beginning and end of the universe, conjectures about billions of years ago or billions of years hence, all of it, is not fundamental progress but a deviation from

the main issue: that is, from the subject's meaningful and justified living in the now.

Systematic/systematizing fight

If the main fight is over “justified action”, then the main task, one even more difficult than taking action and paying its price, is the very finding/creating of justified foundations for action. Otherwise, in our very own contemporary history, have there not been many devoted and passionate fighters who paid heavy prices, endured suffering, and were tortured, both by governments and by the people, yet in practice ended up reinforcing the status quo? For this reason, the fight is, in its first step, a fight that must move in the path of making the subject aware, creating value for action, and realizing that action. This is an issue that belongs to the realm of moral philosophy and political philosophy. But does the fight nature of this work mean that our point of departure should be morality or politics? Not at all. For the very issue of “justification” and determining what is “right” demands a deeper realm. In the final chapters of the book, we will address moral and political issues, though in this volume only at the level of the subject. But before that, it is necessary to examine their foundations at the metaphysical, epistemological, axiological, and cosmological levels. If we are to speak of right and justified action, we must first know “what is action”, “what is right”, and “what is justified”, and in order to answer these questions, we must inevitably first confront these questions: “What is reality?”, “What is real knowledge?”, and “Who are we?”. Yet even this is not our point of departure, for before we can show “what is reality”, we must first be able to speak about “what is the criterion of reality (or truth)?”. Without establishing a criterion for reality, even the first steps in metaphysics cannot be taken, and consequently, from the very outset such ambiguity and disorder take

hold of one's thought that no possibility remains for explaining the justificatory foundations of action or determining its characteristics. It cannot be denied that the ultimate goal of fight is in fact a "practical" goal (the very justified living), but to achieve it, we must avoid haste, and, unlike the history of our contemporary fights, this time we must not sacrifice precision for speed. Thus, the systematic fight must begin, at its very first step, from the level of "logic" or "methodology", determining the criterion of truth so that it may subsequently employ it and ground its metaphysical and practical foundations upon it. Without determining this criterion, no step forward can be taken, although the very attaining of this criterion too is possible not in a vacuum but only within its material and historical conditions, and therefore the very criterion itself too is something constituted and resultant.

But this does not mean that we must, at the outset and on logical, metaphysical, and cosmological levels, first prepare certain preliminaries in order to later in practical levels be able to fight. Rather, from the very start in the realm of logic and metaphysics the fight has begun. Even at this initial moment, the fight already possesses a moral and political dimension. *Principles of fighting in the age of nihilism* is meant to, without falling into the illusion of bypassing or ignoring nihilism, and without neglecting nihilism's dangers and achievements, drawing on the experience of all previous fights, simultaneously design and enact a full-fledged fight across all domains, from philosophy to politics. The very act of designing is not separate from the act of enacting and consequently, this fight has begun now and here at the very beginning of the book, with all its fight significations: inevitably in the form of an all-encompassing "system".

We know that from the second half of the nineteenth century to the present, the very idea of "system" has been increasingly under attack. Kierkegaard explicitly and repeatedly criticizes, and even ridicules, system and systematicity. At one point he describes researchers who systematize as afflicted with a greed for

systematization²⁴, and elsewhere he introduces himself as someone who “... neither writes the system nor gives *promises* of the system, who neither exhausts himself on the system nor binds himself to the system... This is not the system; it has not the least thing to do with the system.”²⁵ Later, Nietzsche wrote in *Twilight of the idols*: “I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity.”²⁶ This attitude reached its height in the twentieth century and emerged in the thought of thinkers such as Adorno and Derrida. So much so that systematic philosophy practically became a term of abuse, and systematizing came to be regarded as tantamount to oppression and reductionism. The primary criticism of systematization is its tendency toward rigidity, dogmatism, and an oppressive reductionism. In other words, the inevitable outcome of any form of systematization is that the system itself gains priority over its components, resulting in the emergence of a kind of holistic oppression directed at individuals for the sake of preserving and maintaining the system — whether political, philosophical, or religious. It is evident that, for anti-system thinkers, the arch-villain is none other than Hegel. This is despite the fact that in recent decades it has been repeatedly demonstrated that the majority of critiques of system do not actually apply to the Hegelian system at all, and that Hegel himself anticipated and answered them. Nevertheless, insofar as the present issue is concerned, and given that every answer is a comprehensive one, what is intended here is to offer a new conception of the (plastic) system, one that is fully aware of, and even acknowledges, the majority of critiques leveled against “system”. This is for the simple reason that this very system incorporates within itself, both beforehand and throughout its

²⁴ Kierkegaard, S. (1992). *Concluding unscientific postscript to philosophical fragments* (H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong, Eds. & Trans.). Princeton University Press.

²⁵ Kierkegaard, S. (1983). *Fear and trembling; Repetition* (H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong, Eds. & Trans.). Princeton University Press. pp. 7–8.

²⁶ Nietzsche, F. (2003). *Twilight of the idols and The anti-Christ* (R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Penguin. p. 35.

construction, an auto-mechanism that resists rigidity and even negates itself: a system that is perpetually open, self-critical, and plastic (in all three senses of formative, formable, and explosive). I hope that in presenting the theoretical foundations for creating such a system in the methodology chapter, I have achieved even a small measure of success.

Marxism, nihilism, and the crisis of concluding

Perhaps the reader may wonder why this text has devoted more critique to Marxism than to any other approach, even more than to political Islam or liberalism. In response, I can point out that, as previously mentioned, I regard Marxism, along with its astonishing multitude of intellectual offsprings and successors, as the most progressive method of contemporary fight, and it is precisely for this reason that I made it the primary target of critique: because I consider its adherents the most capable of understanding and accepting the problematic of this work, provided that they confront their defeat in the fundamentals rather than projectively attributing it to some historical event or to chance. My main critique of Marxism is that, despite its very serious focus on the mechanism of resistance and fight, and its creation of effective paths for changing a political system through revolution, it did not take seriously enough the question of the meaning of life or the deeper, more serious issues concerning the subject's confrontation with their "being" and with their own living. Instead, it reduced the whole matter to the level of the exchanges of the production, or more generally, to the economic sphere grounded in survival and desire (and this critique applies even to the existentialist wing of the Marxists). Thus, despite its achievements, Marxism, by drawing attractive hopes, offering motivational promises, and creating new modes of action, postponed humanity's confrontation with nihilism (from Europe to Asia to South America,

and beyond) for nearly a century, a postponement that in some respects continues to this day — especially by making the vague idea of “justice” into the main ideal (which, at best, is defined as the distribution of resources within a teleological level that is desire-oriented). This also reveals itself in the “ideal of leisure”, which was once a socialist goal but today, because of its results, appeals most to neoliberals. That is, the effort to ensure that workers can receive higher wages while working fewer hours, and dedicate the rest of their lives (apart from sleep and work) to “themselves!”. Here, “leisure” seems to be idealized. Has not people’s leisure time steadily increased now compared to the past as a result of rising welfare (the shift from first teleological level’s necessities of survival to second teleological level’s wants of desire)? But has this increase in leisure led to living more deeply or to an advancement of awareness? Is “leisure” itself not already occupied? In late capitalism, has the experience of realizing socialist ideals (for example, unemployment insurance, an adequate minimum wage, increased leisure time, and so on) not increasingly confronted us with the fact that, in Adorno’s words, “Even during their leisure time, consumers must orient themselves according to the unity of production”?²⁷ And today, with the explosion of tools of entertainment and colorful tricks of distraction, is leisure itself not more alienating than working time? Has the ideal of freedom not turned into the freedom to gratify the desires that dominate, and, as a result, into the intensification of servitude? Has the ideal of justice not resulted in the equal distribution of mass-stupefying resources and equal fair access to mechanisms of alienation? And do all these not follow from the fact that the entire battles among Marxism, liberalism, and the other rivals have been waged on the elementary teleological levels, and have never turned “meaningful living” itself into the problem and the criterion of

²⁷ Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical fragments* (E. Jephcott, Trans.; G. Schmid Noerr, Ed.). Stanford University Press. p. 98.

valuation? But the issue of the relation between Marxism and nihilism does not remain at this preliminary level. One could devote a separate chapter to it, and many of these critiques have in fact already been raised by the progressive Left movement. Yet beyond all this, the issue is to show the precisely nihilistic nature of Marxism. This becomes manifest not so much in the sweet and dreamy moments before the revolution, but in the very moment of the full realization of socialism. Suppose Marxism, with its optimistic understanding of happiness, justice, and freedom, were to realize all its ideals overnight. And not in the ruined Soviet Union or in impoverished China, but in the most successful manifestations of capitalism, just as Marx had predicted. Setting aside the quite plausible prediction that moments after the realization of class equality new classes would begin to form and new discriminations would emerge, if we were ever to have a society in which, miraculously, all the beautiful slogans of socialism (for instance, the “just!” distribution of wealth and resources, and the realization of universal “freedom!!”) had been fulfilled, what then would the Marxist human being do? What would their purpose in life be? Walking, reading, and enjoying life with minimal tension and conflict? With humanity’s basic needs satisfied, would human not suddenly be confronted with the meaninglessness and boredom of their life? Or would they once again project their internal tensions one-sidedly onto external mechanisms, treating them as the enemy, without ever acknowledging the (individual or collective) roots of those internal tensions within the very human? This is the destiny of every form of utopian idealism. The real problem is the day after salvation, the day after the advent of the savior and the return of Christ, the day after the realization of justice: It is then that the terror born of the hollowness of all ideals and the deceitfulness of all promises is revealed.

The issue closely resembles the happily-ever-after ending of literary-romantic stories. The meaninglessness of the entire thing reveals itself precisely at the

moment the lover and the beloved are united. It is precisely at this moment that the audience is gratified and the stories come to an end. The lovers, having freed themselves from all hindering agents and evil forces and having triumphantly achieved union, are now, at last, going to confront the meaninglessness of their love, and what could be more pitiful than a finite insignificant human being choosing another finite insignificant human being just like themselves as the meaning-giving value-constituting purpose of their life? Therefore every love story, if it leads to union, must conclude right at that point so that the whole thing does not fall apart. Similarly, every utopia, at the very height of its realization, exposes its own nihilistic nature. Yet this insight is mostly hidden from believers, because every utopia is impossible and every believer can indefinitely postpone the moment of salvation: even hundreds of years after October 1917, even thousands of years after the birth of Christ.

In the chapter of Political subject, we will show that for the fighter, the familiar and widespread universal ideals such as the battle against despotism, injustice, and so on, although they can and should under certain circumstances become the object of action, are nonetheless none of them the main battle. And they must be justified only in the light of a new kind of fight teleology. Otherwise, these ideals too turn into pseudo-fight; and even if they are not exploited, they at the very least become a battle that postpones the confrontation with nihilism, serving merely as another way of distracting human beings with false promises: whether of the theological or materialist kind. The example of Marxism is highly illuminating in this regard. For more than a century (though up to the now), this approach not only deferred the “true fight” itself, but also passed off its own naive conception of “fight” as the true fight; and by surreptitiously repeating the same religious clichés, it sacrificed humans’ living to a utopian teleology. Though Marxism was both the product and the offspring of the popular desire for that same happily-ever-after style of storytelling.

In this sense, the true battle follows a path precisely opposite to the false and concealing battles. All other battles begin the battle from the now and, in order to make it meaningful, promise an ideal future. The true fight, the battle with nihilism, is precisely the reverse. This battle must begin from the future and vigorously challenge every form of false and postponing ideal, and unlike them, by relying on the idea of pliant time, move not from the now to the future but from the future to the now. That is, it must begin with a radical critique of the future of other approaches and make the now, that is, living, ideal (ideal not in the sense of a conservative acknowledgement of what exists, but in the sense of a justified active confrontation with the now as the ever-renewing promised moment itself). While problematizing the future for the sake of confronting the now, this fight looks from the perspective of the future toward the past. Though criticizing pseudo-fights does not mean rejecting them utterly; it merely means showing the fact that they are insufficient channels for discharging the desire to fight. Thus, in all pseudo-fights, from ISIS to the Greens, from labor unions to the Femen movement, there exists a defensible dimension, though one that only through the weapon of radical critique, can be discovered, extracted, and rearranged, and placed within the true fight.

In the introduction, the issue of the enemy was mentioned, and in the chapter of Political subject a section is devoted to “Discerning the enemy”. But it is necessary here, once again, to refer to it in order to avoid a potential misunderstanding. As soon as the notion of fight is brought up, the question immediately arises: “fight with what enemy?” Despotism? Injustice? Capitalism? Deceit? Ignorance? And so on. After reading the above text, the reader may have formed the impression that the enemy of this fight is none of these, but nihilism itself. Such an impression presupposes a clichéd understanding of fight. If nihilism is the enemy, then why has this text itself assumed a nihilistic stance at the outset? Here, “fight” does not mean the

collision of two opposing camps, right versus wrong, good versus evil, truth versus error. Such imaginary boundary-drawing is the defining feature of pseudo-fights. And if the tone of this text seems to suggest such a meaning, the reason lies in the inadequacy of the available forms of expression. In this work, nihilism is not an enemy but a condition. One cannot fight against nihilism; one should only problematize it. Every form of opposition to nihilism in the age of nihilism relies on nihilism itself. Further still, fight itself is an opportunity granted by nihilism: that is, even these very lines. In this sense, the most illusory reaction, and also the most common, is the abstract and imaginary separation of oneself from the enemy and falling into the delusion of taking an opposing or neutral stance. But the path this text takes is one of fight through problematizing the situation, “addressing and naming it rightly”, and pushing it to its limits, giving it the chance to actualize all its power: Only in this way can one hope for a kind of positivity. True fight does not consist in diminishing the power of the situation, but in aiding it so that it becomes stronger, attacks more powerfully, even strikes more powerfully! Only in this way can one overcome the “condition itself”, that is, “one’s own condition”. It is only after grasping this truth that the second level of fight begins: namely, how to internalize the blows, digest them, and turn them back toward the situation itself. If we regard this situation as the “enemy”, we have from the outset formulated all the equations in a false and illusory manner. The reason for refusing to take such a position is that this battle is so asymmetrical that that positioning is not even available. Any genuine positioning would place the fighter within the ranks of the enemy, and the aware fighter knows this. In a situation so uneven, only those blows have sufficient power that are launched from the very institution of power itself. Thus, in this sense, strengthening the fighter’s blows depends solely on radicalizing the situation itself; and it is for this reason that the radical fighter’s gaze is directed not toward strength, but toward solemnity. These

formulations may seem abstract or poetic here: But as we will see later, the methodology of radical fight (whether at the level of logic and epistemology, or at the level of belief system, or even at the level of morality and politics) rests upon it: A very powerful pervasive comprehensive condition can be struck only by its own powerful force (that is, by its own radicalized form). But have not we always been striving to empower our own camp and weaken the enemy's camp? And has not this very tendency turned our history into one curse after another? This has been true not only of political battles but even of philosophical, religious, and scientific disputes as well: the battle of the people against the government, the battle of workers against capitalists, the battle of science against religion, the battle of leftists against right-wingers, the battle of women against men, the battle of postmodernists against modernists, and so on. But now friend and enemy, at one level, have become one and the same. That is why I do not use the word "enemy" when speaking about nihilism. In fact, the power of nihilism, which over many long years has risen and come to dominate so markedly, has stemmed from the emergence of the illusion of an enemy, and from the existence of a military post within our own camp. I do not deny the ambiguity that has likely arisen, perhaps accompanied by doubt, or even a strong sense of objection, in the minds of most of the audience when reading these statements. I can only ask the audience to be patient and postpone their final judgment until they have considered all the pieces of the puzzle of this fight system.

Chapter 2. Methodology: Logic and Systems of Allegories

“A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking.”

(Nietzsche²⁸)

The theory of systems of allegories

The theory of systems of allegories provides the framework upon which the present system, as a system that claims it is becoming-justified, is built. In this chapter and the next, we will examine the conditions under which a system of allegories can be considered justified. In this chapter we will also investigate the relations between different systems of allegories. However, before presenting our own system of allegories, and even before entering the methodology of the system, it is necessary to outline at a more fundamental level the general structure of what I call the “theory of systems of allegories”. As will become clear in the remainder of this chapter, any claim to certain knowledge of external reality is in itself unjustified. If such a defensible claim existed, we would never have entered the absolute dominion of epistemological nihilism in the first place. With the theoretical collapse of realism, despite its presence in the minds of the overwhelming majority of human beings on this planet, every

²⁸ Nietzsche, F. (1978). *Thus spoke Zarathustra: A book for none and all* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Penguin Books. p. 60.

claim about knowing the world independently of the subject is called into question. On the other hand, rival theories, and the most prominent one, idealism, have also failed to satisfy reason enough and demonstrate themselves worthy of occupying the now-vacant throne of realism, at least for the minority of minds that claim to have awakened from dogmatic slumber. Numerous methodological, epistemological, ontological, and teleological problems are involved here, and we will address each of them in its proper chapter. But let us begin, here at the very outset, from the following position: there is no immediate definitive knowledge. Consequently, every claim about things (things including the world, humanity, and God) is an imaginary narrative that nevertheless attempts to find experiences that confirm it and evidences that support its claim. By “imagination” I do not mean that there exist tools such as perception and understanding that are neutral about the world and write objective truths in the mind without distortion and that in contrast to them imagination manipulates the data. No. At least since Kant’s critical philosophy, it has become clear that imagination participates in both understanding and perception.

Every proposition is a micro-narrative, and every comprehensive narrative about the world is a system of allegories. It makes no difference whether we call this narrative philosophical, religious, literary, or even scientific. What matters is that all of them are nothing more than narratives. Consequently, all domains of knowledge, from physics and chemistry to cosmology and epistemology, to sociology and psychology, can be viewed from the perspective of narratology. Narratology is the field of knowledge that studies how narratives are formed and expressed, as well as the elements that compose them. We approach narratology on two levels: first at the level of methodology (or logic in the broad sense), and second through an analysis of narrative structures within the theory of systems of allegories.

Every mind can, and has the right to, offer a narrative of the world. The human being is a storytelling and narrative-making animal and therefore uses every possible occasion for narration. As the epistemological crisis demonstrates, there is no final definitive narrative, because on the one hand, there is no available method for testing the objective definiteness of a narrative, and on the other hand, something always sticks out of narratives that we usually call a falsifying experience. Moreover, human beings can never step outside “narrative” itself in order to evaluate it. Even when someone believes staunchly that they have stepped outside a narrative, they have merely entered another one. Nevertheless, there are other methods through which a narrative can be evaluated in relation to other narratives or in relation to itself. Furthermore, none of the elements of a narrative are non-narrative and therefore, they are merely allegories to refer to experience. An individual senses an experience and immediately enters the domain of allegories and narration in order to explain the experience. Therefore, in order to explain an experience (a phenomenon), which can be deemed personal or collective, one must explain many other things, and ultimately everything: that is, the world. This is what I call a “system of allegories”. Each of these systems has been examined separately in history: the history of religions, the history of philosophy, the history of science, the history of political thought, the history of art, and so on. Yet it is often forgotten that, at a deeper level, all of these histories are one history: the history of narrative, or more precisely, the history of systems of allegories. From one perspective they are plural (in their forms of expression), and from another they claim, at least to some extent, convergence (regarding the object of the narrative). At this level there is no difference between the most widely accepted scientific theory and the most illusory pre-civilizational superstition. Though this does not mean that all systems occupy the same evaluative rank. Later we will attempt to propose criteria for evaluating these systems or even

establishing dialogue among them. Furthermore, in general we will divide them into two categories: justified and unjustified (or more precisely, becoming-justified and becoming-unjustified). Ultimately, in the main body of this book we will attempt to offer a becoming-justified, comprehensive system of allegories ourselves. But before doing so, it is necessary to show what such a system, and indeed any system, essentially is and from what standpoint it is articulated.

In this sense, every allegory consists of the relationship between two or more narrative characters, that is, myths: whether an angel in Christianity, an atom in physics, or a substance in philosophy. The history of the world is, in fact, the history of the internal transformations and external interactions of these systems. In the chapter of Beliefology, by examining the two main types of super-systems of allegories, namely science and religion, we have shown that there is no rigid boundary between mythos and logos. Rather, there exists a kind of internal interweaving between them that transforms one into the other, and both are different manifestations of a single narrative that breathes and advances by placing these two aspects in opposition: mythos and logos as the inhalation and exhalation of history. It must again be emphasized that the present system too is only a narrative about systems of allegories, and it itself takes shape and becomes justified within one of the systems of allegories. The system of allegories we offer, which is an attempt to explain how systems of allegories function in general, can be outlined as follows.

We assume that every form of knowledge is a narrative, and every narrative is a dimensional narrative. We assume (as a postulate) that there exist infinitely many dimensions. It should be noted, however, that this infinity is not meant, at present, as an actual infinity²⁹. Rather, it means that any boundary that is set

²⁹ Actual in the sense of the opposite of potential. —Trans. note.

can always be surpassed. In this regard we can use the allegory of three-dimensional space itself. Space is unlimited or infinite. If this claim were taken to mean actual infinity, it would be problematical, because I have no right to attribute actual infinity to an object (although later we will be able to arrive at a justified understanding of actual infinity; until then, we avoid employing the term in that sense). In what sense, then, may I speak of infinity? Only in the sense of perpetual possibility of transgressibility or surpassing. That is, although I have no conception of actual infinity, I do have a conception of a boundary, which by its very nature has two sides and therefore always makes transgression of it possible, and perhaps even necessitates it. The world, too, is infinite in this sense: whatever boundary we posit for its finitude is, by the nature of a boundary itself, transgressible. In the same way, I speak of the infinitely many dimensions of possible narratives. So, every narrative is a finite dimensional narrative, whereas the possible dimensions are infinite. For this reason every narrative is always unfinished and incomplete. Not in relation to some illusory idea of a final, perfectly complete narrative, but in relation to the very possibility of transgression and surpassing.

We have called this a system of “allegories” in order to dispel the illusion of any access to the things themselves, or to the pure reality in itself. Every element in this narrative, every concept and object, and even prior to them every seemingly immediate or certain sensory experience, is nothing more than an allegory. For anything to become determinate, it must take on a form, and form itself possesses an allegorical and allegory-making nature. Here this claim is merely abstract. Yet through experiencing the practices in the appendix of this system (especially in the practice of Watch-keeping), the subject will clearly witness this form-making operation of the mind. One of the goals of the practices is to attempt a confrontation with boundaries and with the functioning of the human being’s primary habit as a storyteller and form-maker. The experience of

observing sensations (from the movement of the abdomen to cold, heat, and other sensations and feelings during the practice) is an attempt to grasp experience itself precisely at the moment it takes form (see the third insight of Watch-keeping practice).

On the other hand, we know that the infinite, precisely because it is infinite, is indeterminate and therefore without form. Every form entails a kind of determination and therefore finitude. Consequently, every experience is a kind of finitude-imposition upon the pre-logosian infinite — not infinite in the quantitative sense of the absolutely large, but in the qualitative sense of that which absolutely escapes capture by quantity. Yet although the infinite lacks form, it does not exist without form, for every existence and presence is realized through determination. What we confront here is a system of manifestations and forms that are neither nothing nor everything, neither empty nor innumerable, neither beginning nor end. The infinite requires determination and manifestation in order to be present; yet determination and manifestation themselves also have a footing in the subject in order to become determinate and manifest (recalling once again the Kantian insight that the three-dimensionality of manifested forms does not stem from a three-dimensional essence of the world in itself, but from the three-dimensional apparatus of the subject). Thus the form and manifestation of the infinite are the product of the confrontation of the filter of the subject with infinity. In this sense, the subject requires the infinite in order to be **subject**; and the infinite requires the subject in order to **be** infinite. On the other hand, if the infinite is infinite, it also contains the subject itself; otherwise (according to Proposition 14 of the first part of Spinoza's *Ethics*), the infinity of the infinite would be compromised, for it has no right to leave anything outside itself, including the subject itself. Likewise, if the subject is subject, it must also contain within itself a level of infinity. This level, however, is not an absolute level, for the subject is not meant

to be the whole, but only a narrative (or, in the Leibnizian sense, a representation) of the infinite in relation to the singularity or perspective of this subject. It thus becomes clear that systems of allegories are not merely epistemological or beliefological matters, but also ontological aspects of the manifestation and realization of the infinite, the world, and the subject itself.

Accordingly, a system of allegories is a dimensional narrative. This means that all of its components possess dimensions. For example, in the system of allegories of classical physics (based on common-sense reason), the concept of space has three dimensions. Because of the realist illusion of the absolute correspondence between the subject's three-dimensional experience and the three-dimensional nature of the object, it was assumed (and is still generally assumed) that the world in itself, independent of humans, is three-dimensional as well. We know that the world in itself is in every respect unknown — and perhaps even a self-contradictory concept — and that our three-dimensional experience is “probably” due to the three-dimensional framework of our sensory apparatus. According to our theory, therefore, the concept of the world (if we conventionally restrict “space” to three dimensions) possesses infinitely many dimensions, whereas our narrative (as spatial beings) encompasses only three dimensions. Suppose that I, as a conventional subject, am able to share my three-dimensional narrative with other beings. These other beings might fall into three categories: beings with a sensory apparatus or experience of fewer than three dimensions; beings with three-dimensional sensory experience; and beings with sensory experience of more than three dimensions. All three groups, if capable of understanding the language of my narrative, can have some understanding of my three-dimensional narrative, but each in its own way.

1. The first category (beings with sensory experience of fewer than three dimensions) must, due to the absence of the missing dimension or dimensions,

reduce it to the level of the dimensions they do experience, filling the gap with indicative signs, without having, as I do, a so-called direct sensory experience of it. They possess an understanding of three-dimensionality, but at a different level. This is somewhat similar to the situation of a person blind from birth when they hear a narrative about color. Through living and sharing language with people who experience color, such a person acquires a conception (or more precisely, a narrative) of color, but expresses it within their own narrative framework (for example, describing red as warm or white as cold). Thus it is possible for someone to have an understanding of a three-dimensional narrative without possessing the possibility of experiencing three dimensions. Another example is the drawing of a three-dimensional object (such as a cube) on a two-dimensional surface. We can recognize the drawing of a three-dimensional cube, but according to the narrative of a limited two-dimensional framework. This transfer of narrative is made possible by the functioning of language. Language itself carries no spatial dimension, yet it can narrate infinitely many dimensions, albeit within its own particular framework of reduction and transmission. It is precisely this language that can give a blind person a conception of the color blue, even though language itself is not a colorable experience at all.

2. The second category (that is, beings with three-dimensional sensory experience) appear similar to me. They understand my narrative of my three-dimensional experience by comparing it with their own three-dimensional experience. Here a general notion arises of linguistic correspondence and complete transmission, as though, because both parties to the conversation claim to share the same dimensions, language could fully convey the experience. Yet we know that language, in this respect (because it itself doesn't carry space), can only function as an indicative sign. It is like sending an image through a computer. What is transmitted is not an image at all (but rather a set of zeros

and ones), yet both parties claim to share the same experience of it. The question that arises here is: how can such a claim be made at all? Through language? Does language, as something that is heterogeneous with spatial dimension, possess the authority to prove, on the basis of the interlocutors' shared notion of the experience, that their spatial experience itself is identical? Certainly not. Language can only, through a kind of resemblance (not an objective or a priori resemblance, but rather a constructed and imposed resemblance, though its boundaries with objective resemblance are always unclear), together with indicative conventions, make possible the illusion of a shared experience between the participants. Suppose we have two objects of two colors, blue and green (only as an example, since we know that no object possesses color), and imagine two children: to one of them, from early childhood, only the first object is shown and they are told, "This is yellow", while to the other the second object is shown and they are told, "This is yellow". Each of them has a sensory experience. Even setting aside the degree to which they might influence the object of their experience (a question we need not enter into here), both of them, because they accept the signifying function of the "word" (the signifier) through the deceptive operation of language, will, when speaking with each other about the color yellow, share the illusion of a shared experience. Yet what the first child takes to be yellow would be, according to the prevailing conventional classification, blue, while what the second takes to be yellow would be, according to the prevailing conventional classification, green. Is this shared illusion not equally true in spatial experience? This is precisely the point that Kant was unable to grasp (or even to suspect). It is even possible, if we accept the hypothesis of infinitely many spatial dimensions, that two participants in a conversation about a spatial sensory experience (for example, seeing a cube) might each perceive three different dimensions of the object (thus together sensing six dimensions in total). Yet because of the illusion of

commonality produced by the shared word, and the presupposition that language faithfully transmits experience, they might believe that they are speaking about the same single three-dimensional experience³⁰.

3. Regarding the third category (beings with sensory experience of more than three dimensions), the issue at first does not appear particularly complex. A being that perceives, in addition to the dimensions I experience, further dimensions would at the very least have little difficulty understanding my experience, just as I (as a three-dimensionally sensing being) can easily imagine

³⁰ Without wishing to enter into the fascinating yet highly contentious debates of linguistics, one can nevertheless point here, besides the deceptive function mentioned above, to the freeing possibilities of language as well. In this sense, language (in the sense of logos or speech) is at once both concealing and revealing. Its concealing aspect, which is of course widely recognized, as mentioned earlier, concerns its rupture from first-level experience and its deceptive independence from objective signifieds: language as a medium for shared illusion. This critique, however, has a realist background, as though an objective object existed prior to experience that is lost through its translation into speech. Our critique, rather than referring to an objective object, points to the inherently subjective pre-logosian experience whose critique of language arises not from language's inability to create a correspondence between the unity of the object (the signified) and the sharedness of the word (the signifier), but from the very questioning of objective unity within pre-logosian experience and the indefensible translation of the plurality of experiences (both intersubjective and even the different experiences of a single subject) into the unity of words (the inherent sharedness of language). On the other hand, language not only possesses freeing elements but is in fact the **only channel of freeing**. In truth, the precondition for any form of breaking out from the ranks of the dead is speech (logos). Otherwise, the individual remains stuck in the sphere of pre-logosian experience, sphere of lack of awareness, and consequently has not even reached the level of the possibility of subjectivity, remaining merely a transmuted component of the causal-deterministic process of things. Speech is salvific, especially because of its three main characteristics: 1. The possibility of universalization: The precondition of any form of understanding is universality. Understanding, as the issuing of judgment, is always a kind of universalization of the plurality of experience, something that only speech can accomplish. If there is a critique to be raised here, it concerns the manner of justification of this universalization rather than negating it itself. 2. The possibility of dialogue: Although different modes of communication between beings is possible (of which we are probably aware of only a very small number), and although serious critiques exist regarding the obstructions and internal dogmatisms of linguistic and grammatical structures themselves, what we call justified dialogue is possible only within the framework of a revised version of speech. 3. The possibility of making meaningful: Since the decision to make life meaningful is the precondition for entering the present system, and since speech is the only possible channel for the presentation of meaning, speech therefore plays a central role in the present project. Any form of thinking about meaning is conceptual-linguistic. Nevertheless, despite these three characteristics, and indeed because of them, speech itself must be confronted in the most critical manner possible, from all three directions: first, grammar; second, its channelization/a priori directedness; and finally, its translatability/openness to the other.

a two-dimensional shape. However, the issue is that such a being possesses an understanding of space that includes one (or more) dimensions beyond mine, and it might even translate my three-dimensional experience into a four-dimensional (or higher-dimensional) form. Just as I, for instance, might translate the image of a two-dimensional square into a three-dimensional form (for example, imagining a square drawn on a sheet of paper that itself has thickness). In this respect as well, that being would possess an understanding different from what I understand, a difference for which I have no conception.

We can now show that despite the above classification, which was presented only as an introduction to the issue for the audience, there is no way to prove such boundaries. There is absolutely no way to demonstrate that someone who is assumed to lack a certain dimension (for example, a person blind from birth) does not in fact possess another dimension that I myself lack, and does not translate my three-dimensional experience not into a two-dimensional conception but into a three-dimensional (or four-dimensional or higher-dimensional) conception of their own kind. Nor is it clear that the same situation might not apply to the difference between myself and someone who claims to sense dimensions beyond mine. At this point it becomes necessary to adopt a position regarding what is called superstition in contrast to science. In the chapter of Beliefology we will criticize in detail the claims of “science”, but for the moment allow me to assert that, from this perspective, no clear boundary exists between science and superstition. First, because the authority of science itself rests on a shared experience whose basis is nothing other than language, whose capacity for transmission cannot be verified. At best (and this is the only distinguishing feature of science), it can (though with the aid of culture, education, and social valuation) offer an explanation so general that it unifies the plurality of all narratives around an imagined narrative (that is, it merely produces the illusion of shared experience on a wider quantity of individuals).

Second, what we call superstition consists simply of similar narratives (equally deceptive and equally illuminating) that are not as widely general and unificatory and only give fewer minds the illusion of shared experience. Consequently, the main difference between science and other systems of allegories lies only in the quantitative extent to which its narrative can be generalized and in its success at producing the illusion of shared experience and explaining phenomena through such factors. This success is certainly not trivial, especially from a functionalist perspective, but it does not constitute a difference in essence.

With the promise of returning to this issue in greater detail in the chapter of Beliefology, let us return to the present discussion. Every form of knowledge, then, is a narrative. Every system of allegories is a collection of micro-narratives (propositions) assembled within a comprehensive narrative (which may even be internally inconsistent, that is, what we call contradictory or irrational narratives). Each part of this narrative possesses dimensions which, as we have seen (in comparison with the assumption of infinitely many dimensions), are always incomplete and unfinished. In this sense, no narrative, as a whole, has priority over any other narrative, since it is possible that a narrative we regard as utterly illusory (for example, the existence of spirits or jinns) might, in another dimension that does not enter into our calculations, possess some level of truth. For instance, those whom we label as suffering from schizophrenia, precisely because they see things we assume to be nonexistent, might in fact be a minority endowed with another dimension of experience, and their observations might be as real as our observation of this book. If, hypothetically, we were to, merely in a systematizing manner (in the Kantian sense), speak of a comprehensive reference system of allegories that encompasses all existing systems of allegories, we might say that such a comprehensive system of allegories would be a narrative containing infinitely many elements, and each

of those elements possesses infinitely many dimensions. And consequently, every system of possible allegories would be merely a reduced narrative of that hypothetical comprehensive system of allegories. I am not claiming the existence of such a system, just as for the moment I do not claim the existence of actual infinity (Indeed, the very notion of “existence” itself results from precisely such a conceptualization of something hypothetical containing all the multitude of beings). Yet just as we made a positive hypothesis of infinity through negative premises, in exactly the same way, while remaining attentive to the above considerations, we can make a positive hypothesis of the comprehensive system of allegories in a negative manner and make use of it (comprehensive in the sense of always open). It can also be shown that only one such comprehensive system of allegories could be assumed, precisely in the way that Spinoza proved the unity of God (or of Being). In other words, if a system of allegories were infinite both quantitatively (in every direction) and qualitatively (in every degree of intensity), it would no longer be possible to posit a specific system of allegories existing outside it. This is for the simple reason that, first, any such hypothetical specific system would necessarily have direction and dimensions which, if they lay outside the comprehensive system of allegories, would contradict the system of allegories’ quantitative infinity. Second, if this specific system of allegories were similar to the comprehensive system of allegories in direction and dimensions but extended beyond the boundaries of the comprehensive system of allegories in terms of intensity, it would contradict the qualitative infinity of that system. This unity of the hypothetical comprehensive system of allegories (even if it is non-existent, and perhaps even if it is impossible), while preserving the other constraints and considerations, makes it possible to move beyond pure relativism and to establish a form of connectivity among disconnected divergent sets. At the same time, it should be noted that, contrary to the abstract and hypothetical conception above, what

actually occurs in practice is the expansion of the domains of systems of allegories through the transgression of boundaries and the violation of limits. In truth, this comprehensive system of allegories, like the concept of infinity itself, is not something “given in advance”, but something continuously being created, always still unfinished, and perpetually open.

Given these explanations, if we come to our senses, we are currently residing in the most radical form of skepticism: a plurality of narratives, devoid of any possibility for justified comparison, and lacking an understanding of limitations, boundaries, and the determination of dimensions. Right at the outset, we must strike at the very root of any form of understanding, so that perhaps later we might be able to create and justify a novel type of understanding. For now, however, every narrative is a form of absolute ignorance. This claim may not seem plausible to the reader. This is because the illusion perpetually fostered by science is that one who knows two propositions is more knowledgeable than one who knows only one. This illusion forms the foundation of what is termed “scientific progress”. Reading an introductory book on physics is regarded as a lower stage of knowledge than reading a hundred advanced books. However, our analysis contemplates a different level of evaluation. In relation to the hypothetical infinity we have assumed, no amount of knowledge truly exists: to borrow from the imaginative-abstract system of allegories of mathematics, one could say that any number divided by infinity equals zero. It makes no difference whether this number is one or a hundred billion. What we term progress in knowledge is, in reality, a form of running in place, an illusion of movement toward infinity. Admittedly, there is certainly a kind of movement within the history of science, but it is not a movement toward wisdom, but rather along a perpendicular axis: toward complexity. It is akin to moving along the circumference of a circle without getting even slightly closer to its center. Now, if this movement is accelerated,

does it increase our chances of approaching the center? Would it not, in fact, merely amplify the centrifugal force? Later on, we will endeavor to outline a form of justified science, albeit by freeing its deceptive centrifugal force, that is, by freeing science from its technologism. What is “now” labeled as scientific progress has been nothing more than the quantitative accumulation of information and data analysis, aimed at increasing technological efficiency. For the time being, however, let us explain other aspects of the theory of system of allegories.

It was mentioned above that this system is called a system of “allegories” because it has access to nothing more than an allegory concerning experience and its content. In the Persian *Dekhoda dictionary*, the first meaning of allegory³¹ is given as follows:

“To liken one thing to another: he likened that thing to that thing (from the most credible source).”

Here as well, allegory is a narrative or expression about something that itself cannot be expressed (is not logosable). Allegory is a plastic concept. On the one hand, it claims to refer to a subject; on the other, it admits its inability to express that subject fully and completely. Allegory is both formable and formative (since it possesses a narrative nature, which is the precondition for expressibility and even the formation of what is expressed). The issue is not that something mysterious (like the Kantian noumenon or a transcendent God) exists behind experience or language which is real but beyond the capacity of human language to express. Rather, the point is that although every narrative, in comparison with the assumed infinity of the comprehensive system of allegories, cannot provide a criterion for evaluating itself, it can at least point to something using

³¹ In the original Persian, *tamsil* — Trans. note.

the same shared illusion-producing tool (language), provided it is aware that this pointing is nothing more than a pointing (or allegory). The difference between the superstitious and the non-superstitious person lies not in their claims about experience but in this awareness of the allegorical nature of every form of claim. Human beings will attain nothing beyond allegory in the domain of understanding, but an allegory that itself, within a system of allegories, becomes the only expressible reality. In this sense, reality is not in some experience behind allegory, but is the product of the way a system of allegories confronts experience.

Before continuing the discussion, it is necessary to refer briefly to the idea of “evaluation”. It was stated that because of the all-encompassing infinity of the comprehensive system of allegories (as a hypothetical, non-existent reference), every understanding, as a system of allegories, is in truth not evaluable, or comparable with any other system. One cannot say which proposition is true and which false. Later we shall speak about four kinds of criteria of truth, critique them all, and present our own criterion. But what must be raised here is that despite this absence of valuation, one can still posit a distinction (and later a gradational hierarchy) among systems of allegories, not by comparison with the hypothetical infinite reference, but with regard to each system’s internal awareness and acceptance of this very incapacity. Through this idea we will later present and justify conditions according to which a system of allegories may be considered justified or unjustified. And on the basis of this distinction we shall derive rules for dialogue (or many-sided dialogue: polylogue) among systems of allegories. This point is raised here merely so that the reader, keeping the idea in mind, may be aware of the “direction” — which, as we shall show in the chapter of Teleology, is different from “telos” — in which the discussion will proceed.

Now the time has come to address the “logic” governing systems of allegories. In the domain of methodology there have always been two key problems (still unresolved to this day) that every system must be able to answer or at least take a position on. The first is the problematic of logic, and the second the problematic of criterion. Although these two problematics must be examined separately, their answers must be consistent with one another. In this section we will attempt to clarify the position of the present system with respect to these two problematics. In both cases we will first formulate the problematic itself, introduce existing answers, show the problems with each of them, and finally present our own position/response. Before entering this discussion, however, it is necessary to mention that the reader who is a logician and aware of the knowledge of logic, may find the discussions of this chapter, especially in comparison with other chapters of this book, insufficient, ambiguous, superficial, and excessively allegorical. I understand such an impression. First, if I found myself compelled to step outside my own field of concentration (namely metaphysics) and to explore other domains, it was not because of an illusion of encyclopedic mastery or omniscience, but because I came to believe that “every answer is a comprehensive answer”, and that the thinker, especially a thinker who is involuntarily solitary, must leave the safe trench of specialization and particularism and accept the risk of assuming responsibility for the whole. For this reason, I have presented here the general outline of my idea in logic and methodology not as a complete or final project, but merely as the outline of a new idea for creating a kind of logic through the introduction of plasticity into logic. Second, the term “logic” in this chapter is used in its broad sense and not in the narrow sense meant in “logic” as an academic discipline: as a particular way of dealing with propositions and their relations entirely independent of content. It is clear that if a revolution is to occur, it cannot be presented in a conservative or even reformist manner within the narrow,

limited frameworks of the same logic or the same pre-existing intellectual and analytical mechanisms that both produced the present condition and are themselves its product. Thus, while acknowledging the weaknesses and shortcomings of this chapter, I hope that one day I may be able to expand it and give it greater coherence. And I hope even more that others who are more capable and creative than I am in this field may find in this preliminary outline a source of inspiration and undertake the work of constructing and reorganizing it themselves, so that perhaps one day they may create a more systematic logic on its basis.

Problematic of Logic

We know that Aristotle, as the father of logic, did not place logic within the classification of the sciences. Logic is an instrument for correct reasoning. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explicitly writes that “it belongs to the philosopher — that is, to the one who gets a theoretical grasp on the nature of all substance [that is, in the realm of metaphysics] — also to investigate the starting-points of deductions.”³² He indeed devoted a work to this investigation of the principles of reasoning; yet because the term logic had not yet come into use at that time, he called it the *Organon* (ὄργανον), meaning “instrument”. Here logic is not a science but rather an instrument for attaining correct speech (or logos). In this sense, if the other sciences are the results of inquiry, logic is the very instrument of measurement. Avicenna expresses this truth with precise and illuminating formulations: “The science of logic is the science of scales. Other sciences are practical... And no science which cannot be examined by the balance of logic is certain and exact. Thus, without the acquisition of logic, nothing can be truly

³² Aristotle. (2016). *Metaphysics* (C. D. C. Reeve, Trans.). Hackett Publishing. p. 53.

called science. Therefore, there is no way except learning the science of logic.”³³ We too begin with this most fundamental definition. Just as a scale is indifferent to the content, nature, or value of what it weighs, logic is likewise meant to be indifferent to the content of what it evaluates. Because of this indifference to content, this early form of logic has been called formal logic (form as opposed to content). In this sense, if we attend to the etymology of the term logic (logica, or, centuries after Aristotle, λογική), we find that λογική shares its root with λόγος³⁴. If logos is translated as speech, then logikē is correct speech or correct discourse. This connection is also present in the terminology of Islamic philosophy between *nutq* (speech) and *mantiq* (logic). For our purposes, this brief historical discussion matters only insofar as logic is meant to be correct speech or discourse, or even further, the scale by which correct discourse is weighed. Aristotle classified different forms of reasoning and called those that he considered logical, that is, correct, συλλογισμός (syllogism). In one sense, this Aristotelian method has remained the most authoritative position in the history of logic even to the present day. The basis of these syllogisms is what we call two-valued logic: a proposition is either true or false, and in order to infer true propositions one must derive them from true premises while strictly observing the rules of syllogism. In this sense, the most fundamental principle of logic is the principle of “non-contradiction”. What is striking is that even skeptics largely did not call this logic into question. For example, David Hume, who challenged the entire structure of metaphysics and questioned substance, the external world, causality, God, and the soul after their two-thousand-year dominance in the history of philosophy, not only did not reject the certainty of classical logic but, like mathematics, referred it to the realm of relations among

³³ Avicenna. (1971). *Avicenna’s treatise on logic: Part one of Danesh-name alai (A concise philosophical encyclopaedia) and autobiography* (F. Zabeeh, Trans. & Ed.). Martinus Nijhoff. pp. 14-15.

³⁴ logos —Trans. note.

mere conceptions (or ideas) which do not lead to objective knowledge. He even used it to drive metaphysics itself out of the field. In this sense, throughout history (at least until the modern period), the opposing sides in the greatest disputes used logic without logic itself becoming the object of serious and fundamental criticism. For this reason Immanuel Kant claimed that logic “has also been unable to take a single step forward.”³⁵ Yet when he himself criticized Aristotelian realism in order to carry out his Copernican revolution, although he introduced a new idea and critically formulated “transcendental logic”, he nevertheless did not go beyond the principle of non-contradiction (even though he limited its function to analytic propositions: “Hence we must also allow the **principle of contradiction** to count as the universal and completely sufficient **principle of all analytic cognition.**”³⁶). To the extent that he derived the revolutionary structuring of his conception of understanding from Aristotelian classification of judgments and called them “categories”. This approach remains the dominant one in human thought to this day. The two main problems of this dominant approach are, first, that precisely because it considers itself formal, it remains indifferent to answering the question: Can we have any science at all if we lack certain (definite) premises? This very indifference renders its application to the external world problematical. In other words, as Hume says, relations among ideas cannot be extended to the realm of reality; or, as Kant says, synthetic results cannot be derived from analytic premises. Given that our knowledge of the external world is uncertain (both because of the inductive method and because of the unresolvable gap between subject and object), we can never place any certain belief about the external world as the basis of our inferences. Second, is there no alternative outside the

³⁵ Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of pure reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Trans. & Eds.). Cambridge University Press. p. 106.

³⁶ Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of pure reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Trans. & Eds.). Cambridge University Press. p. 280.

two options of right and wrong (or true and false)? The principle of excluded middle, as a principle derived from non-contradiction, points precisely to this exclusion. This two-valued logic is not suited to probabilities, whereas the inductive understanding derived from sensory intuition never goes beyond probabilities.

Perhaps it can be said that one of the greatest philosophers who explicitly challenged the very foundations of Aristotelian logic and the principle of non-contradiction was Hegel. Even before the *Science of Logic*, for example in the *Jena System*, after criticizing the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction, he devoted a section to criticizing the suppressive result of these two principles, namely the principle of excluded middle (either this or that and nothing else). He does not exclude the third option; rather he accepts it and even regards it as the logical result of a contradiction whose two sides must both be sublated. “Thus it is, in fact, not the many as an either / or — the many that just divides into opposed terms — but the third for these terms, or the absolute immediate unity of them both, and a simple inward self-destroying, the absolute concept, which is, with respect to itself, the contrary [of] both of [them]....”³⁷ Such statements challenge the entirety of logical principles that had stood for several millennia. For the first time, Hegel introduced movement into logic, even though logic had previously taken pride in its immobility and claimed certainty. Once movement enters the essence, contradiction is no longer impossible. At the beginning of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he shows in simpler terms that the principle of non-contradiction arises from a simplistic and limited approach to truth: “It does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive development of truth as much as it sees only contradiction in that diversity.... However, in part, contradiction with

³⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1986). *The Jena system, 1804–5: Logic and metaphysics* (J. W. Burbidge & G. di Giovanni, Eds.; H. S. Harris, Intro. & notes). McGill-Queen’s University Press. p. 140.

regard to a philosophical system does not usually comprehend itself in this way, and, in part, the consciousness which apprehends the contradiction generally neither knows how to free the contradiction from its one-sidedness, nor how to sustain it as free-standing. Nor, when it seems to be in the shape of a struggle against itself, does it generally take cognizance of the moments as reciprocally necessary.”³⁸ Here we confront a kind of progressing three-valued system, which, contrary to Hegel’s own intention, has come to be known as dialectical logic. Hegel’s solution was a step forward, yet insufficient. First, because despite going beyond Aristotle it still retains a footing in him: despite transcending two-valued logic, it builds three-valued logic upon two-valued logic and does not arrive at a recognition of multi-valuedness. For this reason it cannot recognize plurality as plurality itself, and can only incorporate any plurality into the hierarchical game of dialectically extracting three-valued from two-valued contradictions. Second, this logic understands the relation between something and its adversary solely in terms of contradiction (or on a more general level, opposition). As postmodern thinkers (such as Derrida) have pointed out, it does not see, and cannot see, other forms of relation at all. In other words, Hegel’s logic, although highly progressive in that it includes, and even welcomes, contradiction, cannot recognize a non-hostile or non-contradictory “other”.

In addition to these, in the contemporary world we are witnessing the emergence of new logics that can generally be called “many-valued”, or, in a narrower sense, “fuzzy”. One might even claim that the transition from two-valued logic to many-valued logic itself constitutes one of the causes behind the rise of relativism and epistemic criterionlessness. In fact, the death of God within the domain of logic may be regarded as another expression of the negation of Aristotelian two-valued logic. The main question, however, is this:

³⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *The phenomenology of spirit* (T. Pinkard, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press. p. 4.

how can many-valued logic be directed toward judgment and evaluation? This issue will be particularly decisive in the realms of politics and morality. In this regard, some ideas can be found in type-2 fuzzy logic that could potentially be developed further. The problem, however, is that these logics, in one sense and at least as far as I know, have not gone beyond Hegel; rather, they have merely been explained within the same Aristotelian two-valued framework, albeit with the addition of a probabilistic spectrum. In other words, what is called many-valued logic (for example in the work of Łukasiewicz, and a more advanced instance of it in Ben-Yaacov's continuous logic) is not truly many-valued; rather, it is the same two-valued logic, preserving the same relations of classical logic while inserting a spectrum of probabilities between right and wrong (or true and false). In fact, in this form of logic, the Hegelian movement has not only not been radicalized, but even has been circumvented in a way, resulting in a kind of mosaic-like, value-dissolving logic. At the highest point of these logics we are still faced with a form of relativism emerging from a divergent many-valued approach to truth and evaluation, and this is precisely the "logic of nihilism."

It is noteworthy that, quite interestingly, one of the newest and at the same time most fundamental manifestations of these various forms of nihilism is what is called "logical nihilism". Ironically, this concept has been proposed by researchers in analytic philosophy and logic, fields that in practice maintain the greatest distance from the continental (Nietzschean-Heideggerian) interpretations of nihilism. In other words, logical nihilism does not arise from the nihilistic approaches of continental philosophers regarding the absurdity or meaninglessness of everyday life; rather, it arises from internal conflicts within modern logic itself. In any case, we know that there has long been a disagreement regarding the valid logical system between monists and pluralists. In short, as Susan Haack puts it, "The monist holds that there is a

unique logical system which is correct in this sense, the pluralist that there are several.”³⁹ If we wish to speak of “logical nihilism”, we may say that this approach is a radicalized interpretation emerging from the earlier and more established approach of “logical pluralism” (this is a highly significant point, for it reveals the connection between pluralism and nihilism at the most fundamental possible level, namely, logic). In other words, if we consider the internal relation between the divergent many-valued model-based approach and logical pluralism, then we may claim that this pluralism, due to the lack of evaluative criteria among different models (or among the plurality of logical systems), ultimately leads to a kind of abstention and cannot attribute any validity or truth to any logical system. Put more simply: if, on the one hand, logical monism, dogmatically and naively, claimed that there exists only one justified (or true or correct) logic (or logical system), and if, on the other hand, logical pluralism claimed that there is more than one justified logic, then now, as Gillian Russell (one of the earliest advocates of logical nihilism) writes in her article “An Introduction to Logical Nihilism”, “Logical nihilism is the view that there is no logic.”⁴⁰ In that article she presents a fundamental argument in defense of logical nihilism, and the following year she published a more rigorous and refined version under the title “Logical nihilism: Could there be no logic?”⁴¹ Furthermore, in another important article on the subject⁴², Cotnoir places all arguments in defense of logical nihilism into two categories: arguments from diversity and arguments from expressive limitations. Yet if we seek to trace the origins of these explicitly pro-logical-nihilism approaches, it was perhaps first

³⁹ Haack, S. (1978). *Philosophy of logics*. Cambridge University Press. p. 222.

⁴⁰ Russell, G. (2017). An introduction to logical nihilism. In H. Leitgeb, I. Niiniluoto, P. Seppälä, & E. Sober (Eds.), *Logic, methodology and philosophy of science: Proceedings of the 15th International Congress* (pp. 125–135). College Publications. p. 125.

⁴¹ Russell, G. (2018). Logical nihilism: Could there be no logic? *Philosophical Issues*, 28(1), 308–324.

⁴² Cotnoir, A. J. (2018). Logical nihilism. In J. Wyatt, N. J. L. L. Pedersen, & N. Kellen (Eds.), *Pluralisms in truth and logic* (pp. 301–329). Palgrave Macmillan.

Franks who raised the issue of logical nihilism in this manner. Although he himself claimed that he did not wish to defend logical nihilism, but merely sought to provoke reflection among readers about the crises confronting correct (or justified) logic. His article may be considered one of the earliest texts on the subject, and it was published in the book *The Metaphysics of Logic*, titled “Logical Nihilism”.⁴³ In any case, despite the thousands of years of criticism directed at the foundations of logic throughout the history of philosophy and human thought, “logical nihilism” in this specific sense is a very recent approach that has emerged in the twenty-first century (and it seems that news of it has not yet reached the community of logicians in the Persian-speaking world). It will likely have an impact on the future of logic, philosophy, and human thought.

Here, however, my discussion is not intended as a critique of existing logical systems. Such critique — though necessary in its proper place — must, according to the rules of justified critique formulated in this very text, be an immanent critique that engages with the logical norms of those systems themselves. I neither intend to undertake such a task, nor do I even possess the capacity for it, nor do I consider it necessary for the present discussion at all. My confrontation with logic (in its broad sense) has only been with the aim of finding a way, or at least a framework, for explaining the foundations of the possibility of judgment in the confrontation with nihilism.

Given the above premises, the main issue is this: how can one present a logic that can both critique (negative) and prove (positive); that can both adopt a position (convergent) and recognize plurality (many-valued); that is firm enough to ground the fight on (reliable) yet does not fall into dogmatism (open); that can bring approaches sharing a common stance into logical relation

⁴³ Franks, C. (2014). Logical nihilism. In P. Rush (Ed.), *The metaphysics of logic* (pp. 109–127). Cambridge University Press.

(immanent) while also bringing absolutely different approaches that have different foundations into logical relation (trans-model); and that can also incorporate into logical relation those approaches whose relation is neither affirmation nor negation (neutral, indeterminate, the margins, the excluded, the rejected, the exceptions, and so forth). In this chapter we will present our idea. But before doing so, we will also address the problematic of criterion, so that in the end we may offer a comprehensive, albeit preliminary and schematic, proposal for the both problematics of logic and criterion.

Problematic of Criterion

If formal logic claimed to be indifferent to content and merely to assume the truth of the premises of an argument, the issue of the criterion of truth, however, is tied to the objective content of the argument. This issue has long attracted the attention of thinkers and philosophers. In fact, every thinker, before speaking about “what is true?”, had first to clarify “what is the criterion for recognizing truth?” The earliest answer to the issue of the criterion of truth was “correspondence” (an answer that dominated for thousands of years and still governs the overwhelming majority of minds on this planet). The correspondence theory of truth, put simply, holds that our cognition (or a proposition) must correspond to reality (the referent of truth): from Plato, who in the *Sophist* puts the statement in the mouth of Socrates (this time the Visitor) that “a false belief will be a matter of believing things that are contrary to those which are”,⁴⁴ to Descartes, who in the Fourth Meditation determines the conditions of precision and clarity of this correspondence; to Spinoza, who

⁴⁴ Plato. (1997). *Complete works* (J. M. Cooper, Ed.; D. S. Hutchinson, Assoc. Ed.). Hackett Publishing Company. p. 261.

introduces it at the beginning of the *Ethics* as a self-evident rational axiom that “A true idea must agree with its object.”;⁴⁵ to Russell and the early Wittgenstein (for example in the *Tractatus*: “A proposition is a picture of reality”⁴⁶); and up to the present day, one can find similar formulations in the works of the vast majority of philosophers. From the very beginning, this approach establishes a distinction between cognition (or statement, or proposition, etc.) and reality (or the referent of truth). A proponent of naive realism always believes that this correspondence can be tested; consequently, they assume that they have access to both sides of the relation. It is as if, on one side, the proposition is clear to them, and on the other side, reality itself is clear as well; therefore they can simply compare the proposition (for instance, “this yogurt is blue”) with reality (the white yogurt) and declare the result (in our example, the falsity of the proposition). The main problem, however, is that human beings have no access to pure reality in itself; therefore correspondence, at least in such a naively optimistic sense, is not possible. The thinkers who throughout most of history have demonstrated the deficiencies and inadequacies of this theory have been the skeptics. Yet this did not lead most people to entertain serious doubt. Some philosophers treated this doubt as crossing the line for thinking, and some even resorted, in a repressive manner, to the slogan: “either philosophy (realism) or sophistry”. In any case, such worn-out maneuvers cannot rid us of this doubt. First, our reliable access to reality is itself questionable. All we possess is an experience, and we do not know which part of it is independent of us and which part is the product of our cognitive apparatus. Today we know that color, taste, smell, and even shape do not exist independently in the external world in the way we once imagined. The issue is: in the creation of an experience, how active

⁴⁵ Spinoza, B. de. (1994). *A Spinoza reader: The Ethics and other works* (E. Curley, Ed. & Trans.). Princeton University Press. p. 86.

⁴⁶ Wittgenstein, L. (2002). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness, Trans., 2nd rev. ed.). Taylor & Francis e-Library. (Original work published 1921). p. 23.

and shaping is the subject, and how passive and mirror-like? Second, the issue of the crisis of the criterion involves a deeper difficulty. If our criterion of truth is X, then what is the very criterion of truth for that criterion itself? Here we fall into a vicious circle, unless we dogmatically impose a law without proof and compel everyone to accept it, or conversely present a commonly accepted conventional belief as though it were an axiom.

One way to move beyond the criterion of “correspondence” is the criterion of “coherence” or “consistency”. The advantage of this criterion over correspondence is that it requires no external counterpart. We call a proposition true insofar as it is consistent with the other true propositions we have affirmed. In this sense, we measure cognition against cognition itself rather than against something inaccessible. From this perspective, this criterion which is represented by, for instance, Bradley, Neurath, and Rescher, is a step forward. Yet three serious problems arise: first (an internal one), what exactly is the very criterion of this internal compatibility itself? Second (an external one), what if we had a set of coherent cognitions that were different? What criterion adjudicates between them themselves? Third, what should we do if cognition derived from an experience is inconsistent with our system of thought? Which takes priority? Should we criticize cognition derived from the experience or criticize our cognitive system? and by what criterion?

In addition to these two criteria, another has been proposed that may be called the pragmatist criterion. According to this view, we have one or more practical indicators and can take them themselves as the criterion of truth. This is what William James, for example, calls “to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences”.⁴⁷ Following Peirce, he attempted in this way to find a solution to metaphysical disputes. Two main criticisms are raised

⁴⁷ James, W. (1955). *Pragmatism and four essays from The meaning of truth*. Meridian Books. p. 42.

against this method. First, it sacrifices truth to practical priorities and ultimately leads to a form of “utilitarianism” (which, through its association with the human civilization, is based on the quantity of satisfaction of desire, for example in Bentham and Mill). Second, who determines the very criterion that prioritizes between these practical indicators? Even for this prioritization between practical indicators we would require metaphysical and justified criteria.

To these three groups one may add other theories that are in some respects similar and in other respects different: such as Tarski’s theory that truth is realized in a semantic relation; performative theory; prosentential theory; and even the theory of the “redundancy of the truth criterion”, and so on. Despite the various criticisms directed at each of them (some of which have been mentioned), the main critique remains: by what criterion can the criterion itself — whatever it may be — be justified? Consequently, is it not the case that beginning with any criterion, actually hides the rabbit in the magician’s hat in advance, so that the presupposed criterion later determines the positive content and the outcome? It seems that here we are faced with a kind of vicious circle.

Yet one may add a fourth category, which might be called a dynamic or self-determining criterion of truth. We know that this idea goes back to Hegel, who likened presupposing any criterion prior to cognition to the scholastic thinker who “would not enter the water until he had learned to swim.”⁴⁸ According to him, every form of criterion, while serving as the basis of a test, is itself tested by that very test as well. Clearly, only a new kind of logic can explain this: namely the logic known as dialectical. The relation between the criterion and the test (or

⁴⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1990). *Lectures on the history of philosophy: The lectures of 1825–1826. Volume III: Medieval and modern philosophy* (R. F. Brown, Ed.; R. F. Brown & J. M. Stewart, Trans.). University of California Press. p. 263.

experience) is simultaneously negative and positive; technically speaking, the test brings about the sublation (Aufhebung in the triple sense of negation, preservation, and elevation) of the criterion itself. In a very compelling and profound discussion in the “Introduction” of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel elaborates this position and writes: “the examination is not only an examination of knowing but also an examination of the standard of knowing.”⁴⁹ Here he draws history into the heart of logic and transforms argument into a test (or, more precisely, an experience). This approach introduces a new level of understanding of the criterion issue. Yet the main problem arising from this historicistic perspective is whether it remains possible, in this way, to speak of truth and falsity at all. Consequently, does not argument itself, its telos and its criterion, and therefore even the very act of adopting a position become called into question? In *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, Husserl, although offering a somewhat simplified interpretation of this Hegelian idea — via Dilthey — raises this criticism in the strongest terms: “when historicism is consistently carried through to its conclusion, one ends up with extreme skeptical subjectivism. The ideas ‘truth’, ‘theory’, ‘science’ would then, like all ideas, lose their absolute validity.... Nor is there any such validity in the case of the principle of non-contradiction and all logic.”⁵⁰ I cite this passage also to recall the internal relation between the two problematics above (namely the problematic of criterion and the problematic of logic) and to show that Husserl too was preoccupied with this connection. We understand Husserl’s concern, but that concern alone does not solve the problem. The fact that this mode of confronting the criterion undermines argumentative certainty and the possibility of evaluating and judging truth and falsity, does not necessarily mean that the

⁴⁹ Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *The phenomenology of spirit* (T. Pinkard, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press. p. 57.

⁵⁰ Husserl, E. (2002). Philosophy as rigorous science (M. Brainard, Trans.). *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, 2, 249–295. p. 280.

approach itself is wrong. Rather, it may indicate the collapse of precisely that certainty and science that Husserl himself acknowledges in the *Crisis*. At least my position is that Husserl was right in the negative sense: the historicistic perspective and the dynamic logic were themselves among the main factors in the emergence of (in a Husserlian sense, the crisis of) nihilism, though alongside all the other positions (the three criteria) mentioned above. Husserl reveals the problem, but his phenomenological method does not provide a non-dogmatic and effective way out. In short, the issue is this: if we do not presuppose a criterion, argument cannot begin; but if we do presuppose one, dogmatism becomes unavoidable. Hegel's position was a kind of dialectical synthesis of these two sides. Yet beyond science and logic, in a more practical sphere, does this not render every form of "critique" and "justified judgment" impossible? In any case, what justifies the writing of this text, beyond acknowledging the insufficiency of all the epistemological criteria mentioned above, is the attempt to present a new criterion for action, one that emerges from within these four criteria yet is capable of withstanding the criticisms directed at them.

Principles of Plastic Logic

Now the time has come to present the outlines of the positive methodological design of the present system of allegories. At the outset, however, I must acknowledge that this is only the sketch of a general idea whose adequate development and elaboration requires additional effort and an independent exposition — probably in the form of a separate volume entitled "Plastic Logic", and perhaps not even written by me — which I hope may one day be published. We begin with the problematic of criterion, and then extend the answer to the

problematic of logic. This criterion of truth arises from the critique and sublation of the correspondence, the pragmatist, and the coherence criteria of truth on the one hand, and the dialectical dynamic criterion of truth on the other. Inspired by the work of Catherine Malabou on the connection between philosophy and neuroscience, I have called it the “plastic criterion of truth”. Malabou herself, in her book *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*, written under the supervision of Jacques Derrida, declares that she borrowed the concept of plasticity from Hegel. Though she radicalized this concept in a critical manner, far beyond anything even imaginable by Hegel, and turned it into an effective tool for moving beyond Derridean deconstruction, and even further, into the scheme of an epoch. She claims that “every epoch requires a dominant motor scheme, and the role of the philosopher is to provide such a scheme. Plasticity has become a central concept in a considerable number of academic disciplines and thus seems to impose itself as the motor scheme of our epoch.”⁵¹ Therefore, in order to avoid redundancy and repetition, I presuppose that the reader has studied *The Future of Hegel* book to become familiar with Malabou’s idea of plasticity and the diverse functions of this concept. However, insofar as the present work is concerned, I am interested in possibilities within plasticity which, unlike in Malabou’s works, can initiate a revolution in logic and ontology. For this reason, in the present work this concept takes on a broader and more radical signification. Its simultaneously form-giving, form-receiving, and explosive character is extended to the domain of logic itself and opens the possibility of creating a space beyond, and encompassing, the alternatives mentioned in the problematic of logic. Instead of devoting a separate and detailed section to describing and interpreting the concept of plasticity in the history of science and philosophy, I will only point to its

⁵¹ Malabou, C. (1996). *L’avenir de Hegel: Plasticité, temporalité, dialectique*. J. Vrin. “Épilogue de la deuxième tirage”.

functional consequences within the present project. Accordingly, as far as this discussion is concerned, the plastic criterion of truth is intended to contain simultaneously all the four types of criteria of truth, with the difference that this criterion remains immune to the aforementioned critiques directed against those four criteria. Thus we will first outline the various dimensions of this criterion and finally present a proposal of it.

First, although this criterion of truth is based on a kind of internal coherence, it offers a conception of coherence that neither depends on two-valued logic and the principle of non-contradiction, nor completely abandons that principle. In this sense, while the criterion is dynamic, it does not destroy every form of evaluation. In fact, when contradiction enters a system of allegories, according to the coherence-based criterion of truth that system becomes threatened, and if it fails to resolve the contradiction it will lead to false propositions. Experience also shows that in such situations — which, as we shall demonstrate, are intrinsic to every system — either the system collapses or it regresses into nonsense or dogmatism in order to preserve itself. Later we will see that the way a system of allegories responds to such contradicting elements determines the degree of its justifiedness. Likewise, in the dialectical criterion of truth, the other of a system of allegories could only function as its contradictor. Hegelian dialectic succeeded in internalizing the contradictor, but it had no understanding of other relations — such as the marginal, the indifferent, the neutral, or the non-contradictory exception — and in the best case it assumed in advance that they confirm the original system of allegories. This was because, although that system went beyond two-valued logic, its driving engine was precisely that same logic, specifically contradiction. In the plastic criterion of truth, as in the dialectical criterion, internal contradiction is not a threat but an opportunity for the expansion and growth of the system. The justifiability of a system is based not on the absence of contradiction within it (which is

essentially illusory), but on the system's capacity to internalize contradiction. Yet here the criterion is not dialectical but plastic. Plasticity makes possible the recognition of a kind of simultaneous gradation that dialectic is incapable of formulating. Attempts to reach such an understanding of gradation have been made in fuzzy logic as well, but there, due to the absence of appropriate metaphysical foundations and the dominance of a simplistic functionalism, these possibilities, without ever being realized, were lost before being formulated. The proposal of plastic logic could, in this respect, also influence the future of fuzzy logics. In any case, it is the intensity of the plasticity of a system that determines its justificatory power, that is, its capacity to absorb every form of "the other".

Second, the plastic criterion of truth also possesses a pragmatist dimension, which nevertheless does not make it vulnerable to the criticisms directed at pragmatist logic, because while it accepts gradational plurality, it does not fall into relativism. This pragmatist dimension can be considered the anchor of the plastic criterion of truth. Yet what holds this anchor is not its being stuck in a hard rock on the ocean floor (dogmatism), but rather its adjustable weight, and that same weight, depending on circumstances, may also cause it to move (simultaneously form-receiving and form-giving). This anchor of the criterion, which presents itself as a presupposition, is the same "decision", or more precisely "the decision to a fight for making life meaningful". In this plastic sense, fight is the thread that binds the beads together; without it, all the plural beads collapse into a kind of relativism: plasticity is "the yoke for the thousand necks".

Perhaps the allegory of lantern expresses the idea more clearly than the example of anchor. The ship may go wherever it wishes, yet there is always a lantern visible from afar that can serve as a criterion for the ship's movement. The

difference between this lantern and a fixed lighthouse (dogmatic) is that this lantern is not located on an island upon solid ground but on another ship, whose movement and direction is itself partly determined by the very subject (and at a higher level by intersubjectivity) — though the extent to which the subject is effective, or how other factors operate, will be examined in other parts of the system. In this sense we possess a criterion for decision (the existence of the lantern) and also avoid ahistorical dogmatism (the movement of the lantern). Here the intervention of this interpretation of the pragmatist criterion can sublimate the pure formalness of logic and make possible a connection between logic and axiology. Furthermore, this pragmatist dimension is immune to the critiques directed at the pragmatist criterion for two reasons. First, as we have shown, “fight” is not an arbitrary or hypothetical presupposition but the precondition of possibility of living meaningfully. Yet this fight itself is plastic (like the ship carrying the lantern), and the totality of the system (along with the position of other ships) affects its direction and functioning. Second, unlike the pragmatist position that sacrificed truth to utility, here, as was shown, the goal of fight is not the acquisition of benefit or the satisfaction of desire. On the contrary, its first step is renunciation and sacrifice. Only under this condition can fight become the sole condition for the possibility of creation of meaning and justified value in a world stripped of meaning and founded upon unjustified values (later, in the chapter of Teleology, we will see that because of its particular critical confrontation with the very idea of telos, this fight operates against every form of utility). Before fight draws nourishment from truth (as, for example, a practical system might be grounded in the discovery and cognition of an objective true world), it is truth itself that derives its legitimacy from fight. From this perspective, the problem of “prioritization between the practical indicators”, mentioned earlier, also receives its answer.

Third, the plastic criterion of truth is plastic in two respects. One is what was mentioned earlier (namely, its capacity to sublimate in an internalizing manner the internal others — such as contradiction, opposition, disjointness, incompatibility, margin, exception, and so on). The second is its capacity to stretch in order to establish a connection with the external (here one must attend to the difference between plastic and elastic). Now, this externality is itself of two kinds: first, the possibility of a multifaceted conversation (polylogue instead of dialogue) with other systems of allegories (through the possibility of finding/creating a common criterion and creating a relation of partial overlap⁵², as the only way such a dialogue can occur; we later explain this under the title of “alloy logic”); and second, the possibility of evaluating and establishing a relation with the pre-logosian (experience and immediacy). Consequently, the three main threats to a system — namely “internal contradiction”, “the other”, and “foundation” — in the plastic criterion of truth become three driving engines or sources of nourishment for the logic of a justified system of allegories.

Fourth, the plastic criterion of truth is not a purely formal criterion; that is, it is not indifferent to content. Rather, it is bound up with content and is therefore historical. Yet this historicity does not lead to relativism; rather, it assigns part of the task of true-making to the content itself. This can also be illustrated through the allegory of the lantern on ship. In other words, in formal logic the content of a matter had no role in the correctness of an argument — which, given the telos of formal logic, might not have counted as a weakness, but for our project of justifying practical and living-related foundations it is insufficient. In plastic logic, by contrast, the intensity of the content affects the

⁵² In the original Persian edition, this relation is called *Umum wa Khusus min Wajh*, as is called in Islamic philosophy. —Trans. note.

very manner of argument. This feature still has certain ambiguities, which will become somewhat clearer in what follows.

Fifth, the plastic criterion of truth offers a plastic conception of “truth” itself. It neither draws, like an inflexible metal, a sharp and eternal boundary between true and false (dogmatist), nor is it so shapeless like liquids or so flexible like elastic materials that it renders any boundary or resistance fundamentally impossible (relativist). Rather, it constantly draws boundaries, pays the cost of this boundary-drawing, and, when necessary, breaks (or explodes) those very boundaries. It is precisely this continuous process of boundary-drawing and boundary-breaking that generates justified truth. Here we need to create a new understanding of the problem of assessing “correctness”. In this sense, truth is not something given in advance such that we might claim to have discovered it (dogmatist), nor something that cannot be discovered at all (relativist). Rather, truth is the product of perpetual plastic creation and negation in every moment. In short, accordingly, the true is, first, not related merely to a part of a system but is associated with the whole system; and second, it is constantly pulsing, breathing, drawing in, and exiting itself. A static truth is a corpse whose heart does not beat, which does not breathe, and which cannot draw in or exit itself: such a thing must either be disintegrated or mummified. In this respect, the plastic criterion of truth is dynamic. Yet this dynamism, unlike Hegelian dynamism, does not destroy all prescriptive reliance; rather, its very precondition is reliance, and indeed at the same time letting go. The previously mentioned allegory of wooden boards on water may clarify this. The boards always remain on the water, but only so long as they are not used (that is, until someone steps on them). As soon as a person places their foot on a board (which itself is discovered through trial and error), the board sinks beneath the water. Does this mean that, since the boards cannot bear one’s weight, one can never cross the water by means of them? The only way is that, while remaining

“aware” of the precise degree of simultaneous reliability and unreliability of the board, the person must, at the very moment they step on one board, be “prepared” to jump onto the next board. In this way, the very act of crossing the water turns into a dance upon the boards; and as we shall see in the chapter of Teleology, this fight dance even takes precedence over the very act of “crossing”.

Sixth, although the plastic criterion of truth is related to understanding, it is the product of imagination. Contrary to the common view in the history of philosophy, understanding always arrives after imagination. Understanding is an attempt to dominate and conceptualize the products of imagination. If we take understanding in its conventional sense as the criterion, we immediately fall into the dualism of dogmatism versus agnosticism. If understanding is to serve as the criterion, it must be a plastic understanding, that is, an understanding that has internalized imagination. Kant grasped something of this truth when, in the midst of his analysis of the function of the understanding, he identified a function that the understanding was incapable of performing. That conservative revolutionary old man called this function schematism, writing that “the schema of sensible concepts (such as figures in space) is a product and as it were a monogram of pure a priori imagination”.⁵³ Thus here truth is not merely a rational concept (in the conventional sense of understanding), but rests upon the function of imagination. In other words, it is not that something is true because the mind can place it, like a librarian, within the framework of its coherent conceptual system; rather, something is true when imagination, like a painter, can **creatively** place it within its system of allegories (form-receiving), while at the same time **creatively** subverting and rearranging its system (their work of art) on the basis of this new configuration

⁵³ Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of pure reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood, Trans. & Eds.). Cambridge University Press. pp. 273-274.

(form-giving). In this sense, it is not that every step confirms that the whole system “is true”, rather, every step produces the “true-becoming” critical reformulation of the whole system.

These six aspects link the plastic criterion to plastic logic. The question then arises: what becomes of the principle of non-contradiction? Our manner of confrontation with this principle is crucial. If we treat it as a foundation, we fall into dogmatism; if we abandon it, we fall into absolute relativism. Plastic logic is based on a new confrontation with the principle of non-contradiction. Initially, this confrontation is indebted to Hegelian dialectic, but it eventually goes beyond it and does not fall into the obstruction of dialectic. The principle of non-contradiction is like those wooden boards. Thought must step upon them (for, without wishing to grant it the status of an evident truth, we may still say that this mind — at least my mind or the mind of beings like me (“us”), in the moment of confrontation with decision, whether practical or theoretical — initially has nothing else available for crossing and reasoning), yet it steps upon them only for a moment — that is, moment of confrontation, hesitation, undecidability, decision, acceptance of the necessity of the decision, and the leap to the next board and the previous board sinks into the water: the next moment. The simultaneous reliability and unreliability of this principle makes the fight dance possible. Later we will reach the tangible and practical outcomes of these seemingly abstract and perhaps tedious discussions: especially at the moment of moral decision. But before that, the distinctive character of this logic is its simultaneous dual aspect: on the one hand, positive-inferential (stepping upon the principle of non-contradiction as the sublatale postulate of the understanding), and on the other hand, negative-critical (going beyond the principle of non-contradiction in order to go beyond the pregiven boundaries of the understanding).

Toward an Alloy Logic

Preserving this simultaneous dual methodology is extremely important. That is, two logical approaches must be pursued simultaneously, because two intersecting problems require two intersecting methods, and the methodological conflation of either can lead to obstruction. One is the problem of meaningfulness (the subject of this book: initially individual, and then collective), and the other is political and social structure (the subject of another book, for example in the field of politics: initially collective, and then individual). In fact, from the individual standpoint, priority lies with making life meaningful, creating the preconditions of meaning, and committing oneself to them. Here we do not require a universal justification; rather, only within the individual sphere must the practice, theory, and creation exist in a kind of justified plastic compatibility. It does not matter how many people in the world believe in this way of confrontation; even one person is sufficient. Here we are dealing with a singularity that universalizes (though a universalization that is always unfinished). This singularity can also present and justify its singular position in a universal language (it is precisely because of this possibility that it gains the capacity to be expressed through a “universalizing” logos, such as the writing of these very lines) and to move from the sphere of universal singularity to a universal intersubjectivity, no further. There is no need for excessive generalizations (such as all humanity, all beings, and so on), because although meaning also emerges from the intersubjective sphere, at this level (the level of making meaningful) there is no difference between one human being and all human beings, and attempts at such generalization only entangle us in unnecessary issues. At this level, the meaningful unit is the “subject”. But at a level beyond the subject, say, from the standpoint of political and social

structure (that is, where one must begin from a kind of whole), logic must begin not from a singular decision but from the given generality. One must be neither intimidated nor arrogant. Here, many-valued logic becomes meaningful, and democratic presuppositions hold. Yet one must not remain stuck in democratic pluralism; rather, one must advance to the level of a kind of convergent many-valued logic.

I call the coalescing of these dual aspects alloy logic, which is the only logic that makes dialogue possible (both many-to-many dialogue — polylogue — and convergent dialogue). If these two logics are conflated with one another or used in the wrong place, we easily fall either into the abyss of despotism (the qualitative imposition of individual presuppositions upon the collective) or into the abyss of majoritarian democracy (the quantitative imposition of collective beliefs upon the individual). Now it is time to explicate this logic. But before that, two historically unsuccessful yet extremely valuable experiences must be mentioned: Hegel's dialectic and Gadamer's fusion of horizons.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Here it is necessary, before turning to the two examples of Hegel and Gadamer, to make a brief reference to the work of my dear friend Pegah Mossleh concerning his innovative concept of "polylectic". Although it has not yet been published in a refined and independent form (a preliminary outline of it can be found in his doctoral dissertation entitled *Polylectic and Discourse of Emancipation*, [polylectic va gofteman-e rahayi, in Persian, 2010]), I hope that one day the opportunity will arise for all of us to gain access to its comprehensive and refined formulation. The problematic and the method of confrontation of polylectic is different from the plasticity I have in mind, nevertheless, both methods have been designed as possibilities for going beyond the obstruction of Hegelian dialectics. He has articulated a kind of gradational ontology grounded in a gradational subjectivity so that, through the gradationalization of the subject that interprets, radical relativism may be sublated, not at the epistemological level, but in advance at the ontological level, and thus a path may be opened beyond the dualism of absolutism and relativism. I will, however, postpone expressing my disagreements with his view until after the public publication of his independent book on polylectic. My aim in mentioning this perspective here, in addition to introducing this novel concept he has constructed and its alternative character in the face of the present obstruction, is to express my hope for the future of philosophizing in the here and now of the Persian language. Another example is the critical reconstruction of the concept of "co-relational existence" by my esteemed friend Hamid Talebzadeh, who seeks, through a critical reworking of Mulla Sadra's notion of "relational existence", to make possible an understanding of the relations among transversal multiplicities

Hegel's dialectic is an attempt to create an alloy dialectic. Yet, as mentioned, two main problems exist. First, it cannot simultaneously enter into a multilateral dialogue or polylogue precisely because its driving engine is contradiction and it is grounded in Aristotelian logic. The peak of this deficiency is evident in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where, under the influence of the colonialist approach dominant in Western reason in the first half of the nineteenth century, he was forced, in order to formulate the civilizational pluralities of Spirit in the world, to rearrange them spatially and sequentially, and with a linear-stereotypical (non-Hegelian) conception of history. Second, it recognizes the Other only as something contradictory; otherwise it possesses no tool for confronting it.

On the other side, Gadamer's idea of the fusion of horizons, although initially directed toward the interpretation of texts and situated within the hermeneutic tradition, created a possibility for dialogue. He used the term *Horizontverschmelzung*. *Schmelzen* means "to melt", and he too wanted to create an alloy from horizons. But his logic also had two main problems. First, it placed excessive emphasis on the convergent and positive aspect of dialogue. In this respect his logic turned out to be conservative. He underestimated the intrinsic violence of dialogue, and as a result his "shared horizon" turned out to be artificial. Second, and more importantly, he spoke of fusion but had no conception of the temperature of the furnace. How should horizons be heated so that they fuse? Should this heat be supplied from somewhere else or from the horizons themselves? The answer is both: in a kind of coordinative, mutually reinforcing co-frequency. Only in this way can heat reach the melting point; without the heat of melting there will be no fusion. The heat of Hegelian dialectic

by means of a revised gradational ontology. In this regard as well, no polished and independent exposition has yet been published (a preliminary outline of the idea may be found in his lecture entitled "Transcendent Theosophy and the Possibility of Convergence", presented at the conference "Convergence and Divergence; An Intercultural-Interreligious Dialogue, 2019").

was greater than that of the Gadamerian method. Gadamer wanted to melt and fuse horizons but in the conservative coldness of postmodernism, and this was the reason for the failure of his project. The reason for the failure of Hegel's project, however, was none of these. He both generated sufficient heat and possessed a solid foundation. His problem was that, due to a three-valued logic based on a two-valued contradiction, he could only combine two elements at any given moment. Consequently, he could not reach a many-valued logic or a simultaneously multilateral alloy logic (his alloy could only be hierarchical). Now the basic outline of alloy logic can be drawn: that is, a kind of convergent many-valued logic. Alloy logic begins simultaneously from two premises.

1. Inference and open compatibility: The internal logic of a system of allegories

Throughout the history of thought, determining a point of origin or starting point has been a key issue and one that has always been contested. According to the logic of inference, in order to obtain definitive conclusions one must rely on definitive premises. These definitive premises could be derived from two sources: experience and reason. With the collapse of realism, reliance on experience as an independent source of the validity of a proposition came into question; and with the critiques against deriving synthetic judgments from analytic ones (that is, deriving conclusions about the external world from abstract a priori rules), reliance on reason for definitive cognition of the world, such as modern rationalists had imagined, was challenged. Therefore, there is no definitive foundation upon which to build a decisive inference aimed at cognition. Another path, of course, is to enter the realm of probabilities. Although this approach has certain efficiencies in technical domains, in the

sphere of axiology and morality it leads to relativism, and at the deepest levels it results in “logical nihilism”. However, as mentioned earlier, the present system does possess a reliable foundation (in a plastic sense) which, although it may initially appear negative, contains a positive content: namely, the fight. It is negative insofar as it derives its identity from desperation and from standing against (and indeed within) nihilism; yet it is positive insofar as it is systematization, justifying action, livable, and even evaluable. As previously indicated, this very foundation can serve as the basis for a new form of inference which, although it accepts the critiques concerning the inadequacy of classical inference, does not abandon it entirely. The plasticity of this logic lies in the fact that in it, on the one hand, the principle of non-contradiction operates, and on the other hand, the coexistence of contradictions is accepted. Put simply, the question begins here: in order to realize a fight for living, what must be done and what must not be done? Yet whatever must be done may itself be anti-fight, just as whatever must not be done may, at another level, create a new fight. In this sense, for the subject of fight every realized action can serve as a basis for fight: not only doing or not doing, but all the possibilities between them. Here, the fight logic can encompass not only contradictions but also every other form of plurality of “otherness”. Yet if one emphasizes only this aspect, fight becomes meaningless within a plurality of equivalent possibilities and decisions; consequently, any action could be justified, leading either to passivity or to a self-deceptive indifference. At this point, plastic logic at this level must defend, at the moment of decision, a kind of justified temporary bipolarity, not only between contradictory matters (between a theoretical or practical option and its negation), but between “one” choice and the countless “other” choices or possibilities. Here this choice may refer to both a moral decision and the acceptance of the truth of a proposition. This tension is an essential part of fight. Let us give an example.

Suppose a person stands at the moment of making a decision. By telling a simple lie, they could escape a predicament and avoid the painful consequences of telling the truth, but by doing so they have chosen “lying”. Alternatively, they may act honestly and pay its cost. Here desire (interest) stands against law (moral value), and according to the rule of morality (for example, in Kantian morality) the individual must prefer law over desire and pay the cost. This produces a kind of dualism between desire and morality that arises from a two-valued logic. But the **first level** of alloy logic does not describe the situation in this way. In fact, quite the opposite: the fighting subject, at the moment of decision, whenever hesitating between two actions, must immediately think of other possibilities that might allow them to escape this binary. Of course, they are a moral subject and, as we shall see later in the book, they must, while maintaining preparedness and awareness, act in the most decisive manner, and accept responsibility for their action. The point, however, is that this awareness possesses a plastic logic. For the subject, the moral action is never undoubtable in advance. The subject looks toward the lantern, but the aim is not to move directly toward it; rather, the lantern is used so as not to lose one’s way in the ever-stormy sea. If one thinks that the sea is calm and the path is completely obvious, that is precisely the moment when one must doubt whether this perception comes from the lantern’s light, or from a dulling morning fog that has enveloped awareness. Contrary to common belief, the problem of the moral subject is not choosing between the priority of desire and the moral law; rather, it is the creative creation of freeing possibilities in the age of obstructed situation or the closure of inadequate alternatives.⁵⁵ There is always a battle

⁵⁵ For example, one may refer to the well-known case of honesty that leads to evil when faced with a murderer asking for the location of an innocent person. On one side stands honesty, which would assist the crime; on the other side is avoiding the crime, but by telling a lie. Perhaps a creative confrontation here would be to open a new path, beyond the two previous answers, yet not outside morality. For instance, one could reply with utter honesty: “I know, but I will not say.” Here, the issue is not the abstract question of whether to lie or tell the truth; rather, the main issue is the degree of endurance and capacity of the subject to protect their own moral

between desire and commitment, but this battle arises at the level of the subject's preparedness, not at the level of decision and the choice of how to act. Nor does the subject have infinite time for reflection and creative creation; they must act. At the moment of undecidability, the principle of contradiction does not dominate; but immediately at the moment of action the principle of contradiction returns, between the single-member set of the performed action and the infinite-member set of all the unperformed alternatives. One action is realized. The crucial point — and this is the most difficult aspect of moral action — is that even after the action has been performed, the individual's task with respect to it is not finished. It is as if every action is repeated countless times. At every moment the person remains committed to that action, to the decision and choice they made: on the one hand, a commitment to fully accept responsibility for the action, and on the other hand, a commitment to the possibilities that the action has opened for its own future. Here once again the plurality prior to action reappears and non-contradiction disappears. As a result, the individual constantly lives in an oscillation between the dual state of contradiction and the multiple state of co-possibility. This is plastic inference, and the aware preservation of this oscillation is the precondition of fight. Here the individual realizes that it is not merely a distant lantern that casts light upon their ship; rather, it is their own action that determines the degree and intensity of the light, and perhaps even the position and nature of the lantern itself. In logical terms, we know that a theory is called consistent if all its propositions are consistent. Naturally, each proposition can only be consistent if it is consistent with all other propositions, that is, with the whole theory. For this reason, all four kinds of criteria (correspondence, coherence, pragmatism, and dynamism) here merge, at the moment of decision, into an open consistency with one

honesty. This discussion is associated with the necessity of "preparedness" in moral living, which is the subject of the chapter of Morality.

another. Every decision is a kind of breathing: the abdomen expands and all possibilities are felt; the abdomen contracts and all possibilities disappear at the point of action as they are realized. This level (**the first level**) of alloy logic contains the both aspects of plurality and unity, though situated between pure co-possibility and the realization of one specific possibility. Yet this level causes the individual to suffer self-centeredness (a dialogue with oneself): an absolute individual decision. There is, however, another level (**the second level**) of the relation between unity and plurality that carries the subject beyond this singular individuality.

2. Dialogue with other systems of allegories: Convergent many-valued logic

In addition to engaging in dialogue with oneself, the fighter individual has two other kinds of dialogue (coexistence) ahead: 1. The co-problematic minority as a singular universality: dialogue with other individuals who claim that they too are looking at that lantern. Here an intersubjectivity takes shape which, although possessing a kind of universality, does not quantitatively encompass the social or human universality. 2. The un-co-problematic majority: dialogue with individuals who do not look at that lantern at all. Here a serious boundary exists between those who have accepted the presupposition of the priority and value of fight (the specific audience) and those who have not (the general audience). In dialogue with the first group (that same intersubjectivity who share a foundation or are co-problematic), one can still make use of plastic inferential logic, because there exists a center of gravity from which a constitutive dialogue can begin: the very decision to fight. Several individuals may engage in critical dialogue with their co-problematic intersubjectivity

about various matters, from the meaning of fight itself to, for example, the moral or immoral character of a particular decision. Such dialogue is effective in preventing the individual from falling into uncritical self-centeredness. Yet it is not necessary, since under certain social and communicative conditions a fighter may not encounter even one other co-problematic individual. In such cases, the individual must split inwardly (into two or more parts) and enter into a critical dialogue with themselves. However, setting aside this particular case, it is within such intersubjective dialogue that a becoming-justified discursive (and coexistent) space can emerge, a topic not of the present discussion but of the chapter of Political Subject (and later, Politics). By contrast, in confrontation with the second group such dialogue is not only meaningless but impossible; if the individual insists on entering into it, it ultimately leads not to dialogue but to a plurality of divergent monologues. Dialogue (or coexistence) with individuals who are absolutely not co-problematic (for example, those who assign no value to fight, or who have made the satisfaction of desire the telos of their lives) requires a different rule. We have already shown that if the individual harbors destructive emotions (hatred, aversion, or anger) toward this group, or if they attempt to bring them along through immoral methods (that is, any method other than awareness, persuasion, and recognition of their difference and their individual decision), then in either case their action is anti-fight. Yet here we intend to explain a logic that is capable of operating at this level. It is the **second level** of alloy logic, and it too can be regarded as another form of convergent many-valued logic.

Is dialogue possible without a shared foundation? The first answer that comes to mind is positive. Because experience shows that all human beings across the planet, with these many and sometimes absolutely unrelated foundations, even speaking different languages, can dialogue with one another and understand each other's intentions. Indeed, this aspect of dialogue is often emphasized: "If

you have disagreements, that is fine. If you hold absolutely opposing beliefs, that is not a problem. You can have dialogue.” This superficial understanding of dialogue is, ironically, one of the reasons destructive and unjustified forms of violence have become widespread. As has been noted repeatedly, much of what we call dialogue is nothing more than a plural set of monologues. This situation resembles certain absurdist plays in which actors appear to be dialoguing, but in reality are merely continuing their own previous sentences. It is as if two (or more) people, without paying attention to the other, simply read their prewritten texts, but alternating turns sentence by sentence. It should be emphasized now that here we are within the logic dimension of the system. The issue is not merely dialogue, but argumentation. And the problem becomes even clearer when we move from the myth of dialogue to the level of argumentative and persuasive logic. At that point the crisis becomes more evident: how can two (or more) people, with absolutely different foundations, methods of argument, intentions, and goals, argue with one another, present arguments to one another, and above all criticize one another? This question provides the key to entering the **second level** of alloy logic.

If we set aside dogmatic forms of argumentation (beginning from one’s own foundation without regard for the interlocutor’s) or polemic forms (attempting to destroy the interlocutor’s foundation), it becomes clear that the commonly proposed method relies on a kind of divergent many-valued logic, whose ideal apparently goes no further than the mere “recognition of difference” — and in practice indeed reaffirms relations of power. This method, in its excessive pluralistic positivity, leads to the meaninglessness of argument. For the precondition of any argument (and indeed any dialogue) is the existence of a shared foundation, proposition, or assumption. Without such an anchor, how could understanding even occur, let alone argument or persuasion? Under the pretext that “we must recognize differences”, this divergent many-valued

position leads less to mutual understanding than to something resembling the same monologues of absurdist plays, the reading of declarations. More importantly, this method makes “critique” itself impossible. As long as differences do not reach moral or axiological red lines, no problem arises. But imagine someone in the act of murdering an innocent child. If you criticize them, they might respond: “Take it easy, my friend. Let us recognize our differences. Your emotions have been shaped one way, mine another. Please do not be dogmatic. At least until I attempt to kill you yourself, go about your own business.” This divergent pluralistic relativism in practice leads to a more authoritarian form of dogmatism. Consider this statement: “we should not be after changing each other’s culture, as we are not intending to change your culture, you should not be changing our culture.” The speaker may appear to be a tolerant and democratic human who recognizes the plurality of values and seeks peace and reconciliation. Yet it is worth noting that these words were spoken verbatim by a Taliban spokesman after the Taliban’s reoccupation of Afghanistan in an interview with Fox News in September 2021. Therefore, what is needed here is a new logic that opens a path beyond the both limits of dogmatism: the pre-given convergence (never leaving one’s own system of allegories), and the pluralistic divergence (absence of any possibility of critical understanding or evaluation among systems of allegories). This is what I call “convergent many-valued logic”. We must implement the above logical framework with respect to the system of allegories: corresponding to the two categories mentioned above, one concerns the internal compatibility of a system of allegories, and the other concerns the logic governing the relations between different systems of allegories. With these two premises, we can now outline an initial sketch of this method.

The Internal Logic of a Justified System of Allegories (First Level)

To explain this logic, it is necessary to point to the correspondence between methodology and narratology. Since human is a storytelling being and every cognition is a narrative, the logic governing cognition is a kind of narratology as well. Moreover, by moving beyond realism we have shown that every expression and every narrative is not a narrative corresponding to reality, but is essentially an expressive allegory. In the chapter of Epistemology it is shown that every cognition is nothing other than allegories arising from imagination. Thus every narrative general scheme (or a theory) is nothing but a system of allegories. A system of allegories is a set of propositions that, together, form a unified whole whose aim is to express a subject (whether a descriptive expressing of the world, the human being, or God, or a prescriptive expressing of morality and politics). A system of allegories may be justified or unjustified. A justified system of allegories cannot take its foundation from experience and justify itself on the basis of experience, because experience itself (similar to Łukasiewicz's three-valued logic, in a possibility interval between zero and one, that is, between "not at all" and "absolutely") is also the result of the system of allegories. Therefore allegories must indeed be compatible with experience (according to the principle of coherence), but not as their foundation; rather, as a set of internal propositions of the system itself. A justified system of allegories may grant itself the right to issue any kind of judgment about any subject, but it must justify them on the basis of its internal coherence. This justification is not definitive; rather, it itself leads to a re-fissuring of the system's totality and to its reconfiguration. In this sense every proposition, every justification, and every explanation reformulates the entire system, simultaneously performing both negative and positive functions. Thus, in addition to the fact that the criterion of coherence governs it, a reconstructive dynamic internal movement is also a fundamental precondition of it. Furthermore, the criterion of correspondence is

also present, but in the form of a coherence-oriented correspondence that constantly leads it to transcend itself. This transcendence is precisely the dynamic movement of the system. Furthermore, a justified system of allegories, in order to justify itself, must cite a reference principle that it can justify both within the system and at the moment of the system's initial creation. Contrary to the philosophical tradition, this reference principle can neither be of the nature of self-evident rational rules nor of the nature of empirical rules; rather, this principle must be a kind of prescription that gives meaning to the totality of the system. Later, this principle itself may collapse under the internal tensions of the system or under tensions with other systems. Yet what matters is not the result nor the preservation of the original principle, but its justified-making character. In this sense every form of impossibility (including contradiction, opposition, incompatibility, disjointness, exception, marginality, neutrality, and so forth) is sublated. The relation among propositions is neither one of identity nor non-identity; rather, it is an intensity-gradience relation that simultaneously affirms and negates. A system of allegories may contain infinitely many propositions, but at the moment of evaluating coherence, a finite number of propositions must (and indeed inevitably will) be assessed. In the chapter of Epistemology five conditions for the justifiedness of a system of allegories are mentioned. Here we consider only the logical function of these five aspects.

1. The plastic criterion of truth: This has been sufficiently discussed in this chapter. The plastic criterion of truth encompasses and sublates the four previously mentioned criteria of truth.

2. Expressibility: No part of a justified system of allegories is inexpressible. Even when we speak of the inexpressible (for example, the so-called immediate sensory experience, or the noumenon), this very inexpressibility must itself be

expressible. In this sense, a system of allegories is nothing other than a set of sets of propositions.

3. Openness: As far as logic is concerned, a justified system of allegories must always remain open and receptive to any tension-producing element (whether an internal tension-producing element arising from the system's own breathing, or an external tension-producing element arising from its relation with other systems of allegories). However, this openness does not mean flexibility (in the sense promoted today as a kind of postmodern value), because flexibility (one-sided openness) leads to the violation of commitment and the refusal of responsibility. As Malabou explicitly notes, flexibility is in fact the manifestation of the nihilistic ideology: "flexibility is the ideological avatar of plasticity — at once its mask, its diversion, and its confiscation."⁵⁶ Plastic fight operates simultaneously against both the succumbing flexibility and the dogmatic stubbornness. Flexibility without resistance is another form of surrender (its smokeless and painless form). The plastic simultaneously becomes soft, is pliable, receives form, gives form, and, unlike the elastic, is still resistant and indeed explosive.

4. Position-taking: With regard to any issue, a justified system of allegories must take a position (that is, it must articulate a proposition). Though there exists a set of propositions regarding which a justified system of allegories may grant itself the right not to take a position and to remain agnostic. The very articulation of this decision not to take a position and the very "justification" of its boundaries, constitute a justified position-taking regarding those issues.

⁵⁶ Malabou, Catherine. (2008). *What should we do with our brain?* (S. Rand, Trans.). Fordham University Press. p. 12.

5. Plastic signification: Not only the formal meaning of each proposition but also the content and function of each word are variable. This variability and fluidity are not so extreme as to result in meaninglessness; nor do they lead to the stability of meaning (as is, for example, the ideal in mathematics and logic).

Countless justified systems of allegories are possible, and the entirety of the present book is an attempt to present and justify one justified system of allegories.

External Logic: The Relation Between Systems of allegories (Second Level)

Now that we have sketched an initial outline of the system of allegories and shown the conditions for the internal logic of a justified system of allegories, it is time to turn to the external aspect of the system. Countless systems of allegories (both justified and unjustified) are possible. Any justified system can, by violating the conditions that justify it, turn into an unjustified (becoming-unjustified) system; conversely, any unjustified system can become a justified (becoming-justified)⁵⁷ system, although depending on the intensity of its dogmatism this process of justification may exact a heavy cost and lead to its complete collapse and reconstruction. There is no system of allegories that has

⁵⁷ In this text, the adjectives *justified* and *unjustified* are frequently used for systems of allegories. The point is that *justified* and *unjustified* are neither a fixed state nor based on a single factor; rather, *justified* and *unjustified* represent a kind of direction of the system's movement. Thus, based on the arrangement of its constitutive mechanisms, a system moves either toward becoming justified or toward becoming unjustified. The standard for evaluating this direction is the criteria or indicators mentioned for a system of allegories to become justified. Consequently, in this text, whenever readers encounter the terms *justified* and *unjustified*, they must attend to their inherent becoming, and simultaneously consider both their passive/becoming aspect (form-receiving: becoming-justified) and their active/constructive aspect (form-giving: justified-making).

no relation with other systems. Consequently, an absolutely private system of allegories is impossible (for reasons similar to those offered by the later Wittgenstein for the impossibility of a private language). The relation between two systems of allegories can initially be described in three possible states: 1. one justified and the other unjustified, 2. both justified, 3. both unjustified. The interaction of two unjustified systems is not directly our concern; yet, because of the widespread ideological–civilizational–political prevalence of this destructive relation and its effects on the state of all existing systems, it must be noted that such a relation can never become a constructive dialogue (that is, justified–making). It either results in a destructive interaction or, at best, in a set of neutral monologues with a coefficient of influence of zero. An extremely important point is that, contrary to common belief, the collapse of an unjustified system of allegories is not necessarily defensible and may even lead to the creation of systems of allegories that are more unjustified (political examples of this are numerous, and remorseful revolutionaries are among the clearest evidence of it). A constructive relation is one that is justified–making (leads toward justification): that is, it either reduces the dogmatism of an unjustified system, or transforms an unjustified (becoming–unjustified) system into a justified (becoming–justified) system, or renders a justified (becoming–justified) system more justified (becoming–justified), or richer. The most defensible possibility for constructive interaction between two unjustified systems is the intervention of a third justified system acting as a justified–making mediator. Indeed this intervention itself will later become part of the mission of justified systems of allegories, and it carries theoretical implications, as well as moral and political implications (for example, the entry of a third political current into the destructive battle between an established unjustified system of allegories (the government) and its even more unjustified

oppositions. Such radical intervention, however, must not be confused with reformist, moderate, or so-called “centrist” positions).

The other two states are, for the moment, of primary importance to us. **One** is the relation of one (or several) justified systems with another justified system. This state represents the ideal circumstance of dialogue (or polylogue) between two (or several) systems of allegories, because both systems, while defending the coherence of their own positions, remain open to receiving, understanding, accepting, and critically internalizing one another’s statements (or propositions). Here a constructive dialogue emerges that enriches both systems and leads to a critical synergy of allegories and possibilities. Valuing this synergy is of great importance. Because, first, it enables going beyond individualism and teleological solipsism, granting value to the “other” or to the “collective” (“Sages have no mind of their own [or dogmatic and fixed mind], their mind is the mind of the people [or of other allegories]”⁵⁸), without thereby wishing to devalue the singular subject, and it makes possible the creation of a new political/fight system of allegories. Second, it opens the possibility of a form of plastic interaction (beyond dialogue, even beyond polylogue). We shall return to this topic later. For now, it should only be noted that this dialogue is indeed strongly critical, without provoking anti-awareness, aggressive, dogmatic, or hostile reactions. The **other** case is the relation between a becoming-justified system and a becoming-unjustified system. At present this is the most urgent issue facing the present system. Because as we shall see, the majority of systems of allegories that enter into relation with the present system (mostly in a negating and exclusionary manner) are, to varying degrees, becoming-unjustified systems. It is therefore necessary here to clarify the methodological conditions of such a confrontation. For if the methodological

⁵⁸ Lao Tzu. (2009). *Lao-tzu's Taoteching: With selected commentaries from the past 2,000 years* (Red Pine, Trans.; Rev. 3rd ed.). Copper Canyon Press. p. 236.

conditions of this confrontation are not observed, even if a system is justified, it becomes far more likely that the confrontation will lead, rather than to the justification of the unjustified system, to the unjustification of the justified system itself (for example, the justification of deceit or unjustified violence (such as torture) by a supposedly freedom-seeking revolutionary current). For the justified system, this form of relation constitutes a two-sided fight: on the one hand against the repression of the unjustified system, and on the other hand against internal reactive, dogmatic, and unjustified-making tendencies always lurking within the justified system itself. The latter fight is far more difficult and has, in a sense, been the weak point of the majority of contemporary fight traditions.

Any form of dialogue with another system of allegories (an other) must begin from shared elements within the sphere of logos. Without such commonality, no language can be found through which dialogue could take place. The closer these commonalities (that is, the overlapping portion of the two systems that stand in a relation of partial overlap) are to the foundations of the unjustified system, the more effective and constructive the dialogue will be. If, however, the commonalities lie not in the foundations but in some superficial matters (for instance, culturally in rituals, or religiously in appearances), then advancing the dialogue becomes more difficult. To explain the possibility of such dialogue, let us assume the most difficult case: two systems of allegories that stand in a relation of disjointness. In such a case there is, in advance, a state of total non-understanding between the two systems, and dialogue appears impossible. Yet the point is that this situation is not problematical, because no confrontation exists at all. Whenever there is a confrontation, there must be a shared problem, and therefore the situation already departs from disjointness. We previously indicated that no two systems of allegories exist without mutual influence (that is, without some common or overlapping ground), and we shall later prove this.

For the moment, however, we assume that even if (per impossibile) two disjoint systems existed, no confrontation or dialogue could occur at all; thus the problem would be resolved in advance. It is therefore better to return to the earlier assumption: the relation between two systems with the minimal degree of overlap (quantitatively, i.e., the number of shared propositions, and qualitatively, i.e., overlap at the level of foundations, and also manifestationally, i.e., overlap at the level of rituals and appearances). Such a situation (especially if both systems are unjustified) is prone to hostility (for example, the hostility between two dogmatic religions (as in the Crusades) or even the hostility between science and religion (whether in the form of religion's dogmatic attack on science in the Middle Ages or science's dogmatic attack on religion during the Enlightenment)). Let us return to the main question: in the situation of confrontation of a justified system and an unjustified system, what should the fight logic of the justified system be?

It is here that plasticity appears as one of the conditions of a system's being justified. It is the justified system that must begin any form of critical dialogue from the foundations of its interlocutor. This can only occur through a considerable degree of sacrifice and through recourse to the plastic character of the justified system. Without this plastic character, beginning from the opponent's foundations leads only to "polemic". In other words, polemic confrontation begins from the interlocutor's foundations only in appearance; its real aim is to negate them in order to affirm itself. Such a position has never in fact taken a single step outside itself. For can a dogmatic system of allegories ever, even for a moment, step outside itself (that is, outside its entire set of presuppositions, its method of argument, and its myths) and affirm the foundations of its opponent? Unless those foundations already exist within it itself (in which case it would count as the case of dialogue beginning from shared foundations). It is precisely when such shared foundations are absent

that the real difficulty begins and consequently, the void can only be filled by the justified system of allegories. By virtue of its plastic (form-receiving) character and its openness, this system can internalize the foundations of its interlocutor (as though they were its own foundations: plastic rigidification), and use them as the material for processing (both argumentative and historical) yet in its own manner (form-giving). In *Projections of Philosophy* I devoted a chapter to this method of critique under the title “Immanent critique”. At the end of that chapter, after presenting my positions, I concluded that a justified system,

must show not the lack of “correspondence” between the rival’s conclusions and the critic’s own criteria, but rather the lack of compatibility between the rival’s conclusions and the rival’s own criteria. Only in this way can one speak of genuine critique. In the end we must assert that in such critique, if it is formulated in a radical way, it need not have only two sides. That is, it is not to, by relying on two-valued logic, lead merely either to the negation of the rival (affirmation of oneself) or to the affirmation of the rival (negation of oneself). Instead, in a dialectical confrontation there is the possibility that the critic ultimately sublates both themselves and their rival. If the critic truly seeks truth, they must simultaneously avoid dogmatism — so that they can criticize themselves — and avoid relativism — so that they can allow themselves to criticize the other. Both dogmatism and relativism make “critique” impossible. The true critic (the radical-dialectical one) must know that truth is not a pre-given dogmatic proposition, or more precisely, it is not the case at all that truth “is”, rather, truth “becomes”. They themselves, their critique itself against their rival, even their critique against themselves, their very effort to reach a more comprehensive level that encompasses and sublates themselves and their rival, all of this

affirms and reinforces this dynamic truth. Truth is nothing other than this progressing process of negation and affirmation. Only through this way can the critic consider themselves a herald of truth and a true representative of critique. Radical critique is like a curse that disturbs the sleep of everyone, including even the critic themselves, and it has sworn no brotherhood with anyone.⁵⁹

The general idea of that earlier text still runs through the present text, with the difference that in that earlier writing there was still hope that the problem could be solved within the framework of an interpretation of dialectics, even if a progressive one. Consequently, that text had not yet become sufficiently disillusioned with dialectics to conceive of creating a new plastic logic from within it. The main problem with dialectics, in this respect, is that although it attempts to move beyond two-valued logic, it is incapable of preserving the two sides of contradiction simultaneously and therefore seeks to sublimate them in a third. Thus, although dialectics does not exclude the third, and in this respect is more progressive than classical logic, it cannot endure contradiction itself and therefore immediately tends toward a sublating third. This critique of dialectical logic forms the basis of radical critiques of Hegel's philosophy of history, Hegelian teleology, and especially Hegel's political philosophy. The above quotation from *Projections of Philosophy*, grounded in dialectical logic, also still lacks even a picture of a simultaneous many-sided dialogue or polylogue among plural systems. With this in mind, a justified system of allegories in dialogue with an unjustified system of allegories must accept the sacrifice of beginning precisely from premises in which it has absolutely no belief, or which conflict with the propositions of its own system (in the dialogue between two justified systems of allegories, this sacrifice is reciprocal and therefore no longer counts

⁵⁹ Ardebili, M. M. (2026). *Projections of philosophy* (H. Rouh-al-amini, Trans.) [Manuscript in preparation]. (Original work published 2020). chap. "Immanent critique".

as a sacrifice). At this point, two questions arise: to what extent is such a method possible, and if it is possible, to what extent is it even permissible?

Advancing such a method is in fact far more difficult than it might seem. Every system of allegories tends toward dogmatization and toward ever greater affirmation of its own foundations. Consequently, the non-hypocritical acceptance of the interlocutor's foundations, while preserving (or even suspending) one's own foundations, requires an alloy logic. It should be reminded that the aim is not to eliminate and subjugate the interlocutor, but rather to justify it (considering the both meanings of the term simultaneously: on the one hand transforming it into a justified or more justified system (justifying in the sense of changing), and on the other hand providing its justification and reasoning (justifying in the sense of defending)). This is the cost that a justified system of allegories must pay. If it shirks this responsibility, its own justified status will also come into question. This method is difficult above all because it runs counter to three familiar habits of unjustified systems. First, the system's conatus (the uncritical prioritization of self-preservation); second, the ideal of rapid victory (short-circuiting) in fight; and finally, the determination of the other as a rival who must be subdued (getting nourishment by manufacturing enemies). In a justified system, however, all three of these habits are challenged. Though in certain circumstances even this method is ineffective. For example, when the other system of allegories avoids entering into any form of dialogue and directs its mode of confrontation in a hostile manner toward negating the very essence of the justified system. In such a case, the justified system of allegories must engage in "resistance". This resistance is simultaneously directed against three destructive factors: first, its own internal tendency toward reactive dogmatization and thus the abandonment of openness; second, its tendency to reduce communication to reciprocal hostility and to abandon all hope for the whole or parts of the other system with which

dialogue, and perhaps even temporary cooperation, might be possible; and most importantly, third, resistance against the attacks of the other side with the aim of preserving and protecting not itself as mere conatus, but its achievements as a system that is becoming-justified and justified-making. Here the system may even display a form of defensive strategy. It must always be prepared for such a possibility and maintain its strength so that whenever the other side departs from the path of dialogue and attempts, through destructive methods (for example political repression), to annihilate the entirety of the justified system of allegories, this system can endure and defend itself and its justified-making achievements, though only on the condition that it never abandons its own justified-making principles and never sacrifices means for ends. Later in the book, especially in the chapter of Political Subject, we will discuss this issue in detail and also outline the more concrete and practical implications of this approach in religious, cultural, and political relations.

If we imagine the scale of the discussion beyond two-sided relationships, further explanations become necessary. The issue is that a system of allegories is always related to a large number of other systems of allegories. At a first step, one might define all relations pairwise and through the justification that the above considerations can be applied to each reciprocal relation, solve the issue. But this justification is not acceptable and rests on the limitations of dialogue-centered logic (limitations that we know even dialectics suffers from). Many-sided dialogue (or polylogue) differs from a set of two-sided dialogues and requires its own specific logic. In such a situation, a proposition from one system not only plays a role simultaneously within two-sided relations between that system and other systems, but can even solemnly shape many-sided dialogues around a shared issue. Moreover, it may even play a justified-making role within two-sided (or many-sided) dialogues among other systems themselves. Likewise, every proposition in any other system may play a role not

only within its direct relations with this system but also within the relations that all other systems have with this system or with each other. The degree of this influence depends on various factors: the extent of overlapping domains, shared language, shared foundations, shared issues, shared relations with other systems, and so forth. As mentioned earlier, a justified system of allegories may even enter within the relationship between two unjustified systems of allegories in order to work toward the justification of both and thereby enrich itself more as well. For although a system of allegories can become justified at the level of necessity without dependence on other systems of allegories, justification at higher levels requires the evermore justification of other systems. The present system, as a critic of utopianism, does not intend here to speak of a utopia of justified systems (perhaps because of the same despair dominating our age and the low ceiling of hopes: in Kafka's words, "Oh, hope enough, infinite hope — just not for us"). Yet a utopianist justified system of allegories might, with greater hope than we possess, attempt in its own way to sketch such a telos.

Given the above explanations, the relations among different systems of allegories, with their diverse foundations and issues, can be organized according to a kind of convergent many-valued logic. What renders this many-valued logic convergent is both the justified-making centrality of the relation from the side of the justified system and the plastic acceptance of the interlocutor's foundations in order to create the possibility of dialogue. In conditions of conflict (such as war or revolution) too, whose primary cause is not the justified system but rather the desire of at least one unjustified system for dialogue-refusing repression, the justified system, while solemnly organizing a comprehensive resistance, still seeks the cessation of conflict through justified-making critical dialogue. In other sections we will see that entering into destructive conflict is one of the strategies of unjustified systems of allegories to avoid constructive dialogue and to produce a false polarization

of the discursive sphere; even if it leads to their own complete annihilation. For a dogmatic unjustified system, accepting openness and plasticity is far more difficult than submitting to annihilation.

The most prominent example of this phenomenon is belief in religions (though here atheism must also be considered a kind of religion, with the same degree of dogmatism and an equally unjustified and dogmatic system of allegories). But let me point here to a much clearer and more tangible example of the possibility of realizing this plastic polylogue: medicine. Today we witness many different forms of medicine, from modern medicine to various types of so-called complementary or alternative medicine, such as Iranian traditional medicine (Avicennian), Chinese traditional medicine (TCM), Indian traditional medicine (Ayurveda), Sujok therapy, and many others that could be added to this list. Upon an initial examination, it becomes clear that at least the “dominant and common” narrative of all these medicines as systems of allegories, is unjustified, and this for the simple reason that they are not open to one another; indeed, each may even regard the others as enemies. The one-sided reactions of each of them (and their bigoted supporters and believers) during the recent pandemic (COVID-19) turned into a rather absurd spectacle of tension between unjustified systems of allegories, though one that came at the cost of many lives. Yet in practice, if we genuinely attempt to move beyond this one-sidedness and attend to their possibilities, we will find that each of them is more effective than the others for certain illnesses. For instance, the modern corpse-centered medicine, due to the invention of vaccines and antibiotics, is in some respects more effective in dealing with certain infectious and viral diseases, especially in emergency cases. By contrast, in the case of some psychological conditions (such as stress, anxiety, and depression) or migraine headaches, the use of modern medical prescriptions makes a person progressively sicker and weaker, because it does not target the root of the issue and merely attempts to reduce or

conceal symptoms by diminishing the range of the individual's sensitivity, thereby de-subjectivizing the person. On the other hand, holistic medical traditions, because they attend to general structures such as temperamental typologies (for example, the four humors: phlegmatic, choleric, melancholic, and sanguine, or the three doshas: pitta, vata, and kapha, and the like), though they suppress exceptions and submit to dogmatism regarding boundaries and the foundational system of allegories, and which are sometimes linked to an unjustified conventional or religious system of allegories as well, can offer very simple and effective solutions for certain serious problems, for which modern medicine would prescribe large quantities of drugs over long periods for a so-called cure. These holistic traditions attempt to resolve the root of the problem through restoring balance among temperaments. Other approaches, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine, which analyzes balance through the opposing directions of yin and yang from the perspective of the five elements, focus not on examining organs separately but on the movement and transformation of vital energy (qi) through meridians across the entire body. One can analyze and compare these structures (though it is a task for specialists in this field). Yet insofar as I can see, as an attentive observer in the field, it is clear that each of these systems of allegories is more effective in some domains and less effective in others. However, the custodians and experts of these systems largely exist in a state of hostility toward rival systems, to the point that each accuses the others of charlatanry or even lethality. Believers in these systems also tend (much like believers in different religions) either to develop a dogmatic attachment to one system combined with suspicion toward the others, or, conversely, to fall into a kind of postmodern relativism, seeking refuge in an unjustified, incoherent, and makeshift mixture of all these systems, ranging from home remedies to Instagram advertisements. To move beyond this situation, the first step is "humility": abandoning one-sidedness and accepting the fact that each of these

systems possesses its own benefits and evidences. At this stage, a desire may arise to integrate and combine these systems. Yet the point is that two absolutely different systems (with different foundations, definitions, methodologies, and even modes of sensitivity) cannot be integrated except by creating a new system encompassing both (the Hegelian idea of sublation). But such a goal is usually impossible, because dialectical integration is meaningful for systems that exist within a relation of opposition or contradiction, whereas different medical systems of allegories (for example, modern and traditional medicine) possess structures that are so utterly “different” that they do not even lend themselves to opposition or contradiction. In practice too (though as far as I have observed and followed), successful attempts to connect such medical systems, carried out by individuals who have moved beyond their initial dogmatic one-sidedness and have acknowledged both (or several) sides and acquired expertise and knowledge in them, have not resulted in a comprehensive system that sublates all sides. Rather, what has emerged is only the possibility of approximate translatability between them, the differentiation of their domains of effectiveness (that is, determining in which cases each works more strongly), and, even in the best and most effective method, the development of medications through this inter-systemic collaboration. Though this confrontation is merely an initial level of what I call entering into plastic interaction. And such a task can only be undertaken by individuals who confront systems of allegories in a justified manner: that is, those who, while attempting critically to open the dogmatic closures of these systems (though through the aforementioned method of plastic and immanent critique), at the same time acknowledge, reveal, and even revive the possibilities that had remained hidden behind this dogmatism. This is where a justified position can enter the false and dogmatic conflict of unjustified systems of allegories, reveal their possibilities both to themselves and to others, and contribute to their enrichment and

justification. And indeed the greatest obstacle on this path is probably the custodians of dogmatism themselves, who derive their livelihood from this dogmatism, as well as believers who have become addicted to unjustified modes of belief. Though some preliminary steps in this direction have been taken (a very elementary example of this method in linking modern medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine can be found in Bisong Guo and Andrew Powell's book *Listen to Your Body*⁶⁰). Yet here only a plastic confrontation can truly be effective and promise the emergence of a kind of becoming-justified system of allegories oriented toward a comprehensive plastic medicine, without attempting to sublimate, merge, or dissolve individual systems into a single system.

A similar issue appears in the analysis of symptoms, though addressing it lies beyond the scope of the present discussion and requires far more technical preliminaries. For example, if two people (say, a physician and an exorcist) simultaneously encounter an individual who is trembling and foaming at the mouth, we would certainly witness two different narratives regarding the cause of this symptom: the former will likely diagnose epilepsy, while the latter will interpret it as demonic possession. It is clear that we would probably consider the latter imaginary and the former scientific. The modern physician will prescribe a considerable number of medications that will likely cause drowsiness and reduce the person's range of sensory, motor, and cognitive capacities, but will probably control and reduce the attacks. Now suppose the exorcist proposes performing a session of exorcism (for example, a ritual like *Zar* in southern Iran). We would most likely oppose such illusory and superstitious methods. Yet imagine that, out of desperation, we allow the session to take place, and immediately afterward the patient recovers, all

⁶⁰ Guo, B., & Powell, A. (2001). *Listen to your body: The wisdom of the Dao*. University of Hawai'i Press.

symptoms disappear, and without the need for any medication the person returns to a normal condition. How should this be analyzed? Either we continue to rely unconditionally on the system of allegories of modern medicine and attempt to trivialize the rival method or present its success as accidental, or our beliefs suddenly change and we come to believe in the rival system of allegories (something similar to religious conversion). The point is that both reactions are dogmatic and unjustified. For both systems are unjustified, and moving from one to the other (for example, from modern medicine to premodern myths of exorcism) is like falling from hole into pit. A falsifying experience (even many such experiences) may indicate the incompleteness or insufficiency of a system, but it is by no means a justification for defending another system, since that system too is full of deficiencies and incompletions. Yet all unjustified systems, through the dogmatic strategies they deploy for their believers, cultivate a kind of dogmatic and one-sided belief in order to preserve their believers and intensify their beliefs. It is here that justifying systems of allegories (that is, immanent critique, plastic enrichment, and the acknowledgement of possibilities) becomes necessary, and such a falsifying experience can become an opportunity to, without falling into another dogmatic system, cultivate a kind of listening and openness that allows us to grasp other dimensions and create new alternatives for analyzing and confronting problems. Nevertheless, transcending a becoming-unjustified system of allegories without falling into another becoming-unjustified system of allegories is an arduous task and requires a high degree of awareness and preparedness. This is precisely the plastic logic of inter-systemic confrontation.

A Revised Hidden Syllogism

Here, after presenting the idea of convergent many-valued logic, we can also mention another logical method that may help advance discussion in certain situations, especially in the age of uncertainty. I have called it the “revised hidden syllogism”. It is a hybrid of deduction and induction. On the one hand, because of the absence of accepted definitive premises (in deduction), and on the other hand because of the incomprehensiveness of reducing universality to plurality of particulars, or of arriving at universality through the analysis of always-incomplete particulars (in induction), both deduction and induction face serious problems under present conditions. Yet for solving certain problems we can appeal to a reconstructed version of the idea of the hidden syllogism. We know that a hidden syllogism operates when we cannot prove a proposition for all members of a set within a single argument. If we can divide that set into several subsets such that, taken together, they cover all members of the original set (it does not matter if they also include additional members), then by proving the proposition separately for each subset we may regard it as proven for the original set as well. For example, a triangle must fall into one of three cases: it is either equilateral, isosceles, or scalene. Thus, if we prove a single rule separately for each of these three cases, we may regard it as proven for any triangle.

But the crucial point is this: is such a classification really attainable? Is it even possible to delimit and determine all the possibilities of a given situation? It is precisely here that a certain form of induction enters the picture. The issue is that according to the hidden syllogism, in order to prove a proposition about a set we must prove it for all possible states of that set. But is it even possible to reach all possible states? Certainly not. Even the threefold classification of triangles mentioned above is questioned today in non-Euclidean geometry, where other kinds of triangles (in one sense, infinitely many kinds) can be conceived. Here, however, by acknowledging the distinction between the

“possible” and the “existent”, one may take the “existent” as the criterion and allow any possibility, whenever it becomes existent, to enter the equations. In other words, in solving a problem we take into account all existent answers (not all possible answers). If a proposition proves true for all of them, then according to this revised hidden syllogism we consider it true until further notice (that is, until a new possibility becomes existent or appears). This approach is defensible, and even comprehensible, only through the openness and plasticity of plastic logic. It may even offer a new path for resolving the dispute between historicism and decisive judgment. Moreover, the method works mainly in a negative manner and combines itself with a kind of revised *reductio ad absurdum*. If, in an obstructed situation of problem-solving, all existing solutions are rejected except one, that solution, without being proven, may be provisionally accepted simply because it has not been rejected. If more than one unrejected solution or idea remains, then one must choose among them either on the basis of shared criteria and values (coherence) or non-shared criteria and values (convergent many-valued), or else pursue both simultaneously (alloy). Earlier, in the introduction to this work, we used this method to justify “fight”. Whenever a new solution is proposed that cannot be rejected, it too can be incorporated into the calculations in the same way. If a situation of absolute obstruction arises (that is, if no unrejected solution remains), then one must, with the aid of imagination, open a new path and create a new possibility either in the formulation of the problem or in the answers. Put more simply: one must open a path or make a path or become a path. This method is not a conventional method of proof, but in the present age (of obstruction) it may quite literally be “path-opening”.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to present the general idea of a kind of logic capable of moving beyond the difficulties facing both the problematic of logical method and the problematic of criteria, thereby opening a new path.

With respect to criteria, we observed that one can defend a plastic criterion against the critiques directed at the four classical criteria. In other words, the problem of the inaccessibility of the referent (in the correspondence criterion of truth) no longer arises. The problem of internal coherence is likewise resolved by the absence of an a priori criterion and by the generativeness of the criterion in the repeated referral of each proposition to the universality. In response to the question of how to judge between a set of coherent systems, detailed explanations were offered considering the justifiedness or unjustifiedness of such systems, through the help of convergent many-valued logic. Another difficulty of the coherence criterion was this: if a cognition (for example, an experiential cognition) comes into conflict with the totality of cognition, what should be done? Should the totality be sacrificed for the exception, or the other way around? We resolved this problem through the concept of openness and plasticity, grounding justifiedness itself in the preservation of the tension between the universal and the particular (or between a general rule and a falsifying experience). In this way we neither elevated the exception into a value nor suppressed it. We also attempted to, while not falling into the historicistic relativism of the dynamic criterion of truth, by means of a kind of gradational theory within many-valued logic, without submitting to dogmatism, avoid anti-judgment and anti-critique relativism.

Finally, this logic is based, on the one hand, on the principle of non-contradiction (at the moment of issuing a theoretical judgment or making a practical decision), and on the other hand it accepts the co-presence of contradictions (as well as other forms of difference; though contradiction seems the most stringent, differences like neutrality, margin, and exception problematize a system more than contradiction). Yet it does not do so through unopen dialectical sublation, but rather by preserving both sides simultaneously in an alloy relation. This means that at the moment of judging

truth (or even acting, for instance at the moment of a moral decision) a form of non-contradiction occurs between one choice and all other choices; at the same time, however, a possibility-oriented logic prevails, which, both before the decision and after its realization, reveals the vast possibilities of the decision itself. As has been repeatedly emphasized, the question is not “this or that?” (the position of two-valued logic). Nor is it “how both simultaneously but on two different levels?” (the Kantian confrontation of resolving contradiction by resolving overlap). Nor even “how both simultaneously in a new synthesis?” (the Hegelian position of *Aufhebung*). Rather, the question is: “how both simultaneously at the same level and regarding a single issue (decision or judgment)?”

The analogy of the two hemispheres of the brain can be illuminating in this regard. As was once commonly believed, each hemisphere of the brain has a specific function that is essentially different from, and even opposed to, that of the other hemisphere. For example, one emphasizes human individuality and separation from the world, while the other emphasizes unity with the world and the dissolution of the subject within it. The question then arises: in the end, which one? Some advocate empowering this hemisphere, while others support empowering that one. Setting aside the serious criticisms of this very hemispheric division itself and the simplistic attribution of behaviors or traits to a single physical-spatial point in the brain; this issue here is raised merely as an allegory (and as we shall see, science does not offer us anything more than that). The problem is not “in the end, which one?”, that is, judging which hemisphere is correct, but rather “how both simultaneously?”. Incidentally, one of the most important concepts that contemporary neuroscience uses to explain the behavior of the mind, in contrast to the above-mentioned location-centered physicalist approach, is plasticity itself. “A medium for the differentiation of opposites, plasticity holds the extremes together in their

reciprocal action”⁶¹. And it is by radicalizing plasticity, from opposition to contradiction, that one can raise this question regarding the very principle of non-contradiction itself as well: how both simultaneously? Both non-contradiction and co-presence of contradictions? Any answer to this problem opens a path beyond the obstruction of two-valued logic while simultaneously opening a space for creating new possibilities for thought, living, and fight.

Moreover, with the help of plastic logic, another level of the possibility of accepting “both simultaneously” (or even beyond that, all the moments of the spectrums of possible axes simultaneously) can be proposed. This can be applied in the vast majority of contradictory cases (and also to all the moments of the spectrum between two contradictions — and this means making the dialectic itself plastic). In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant placed antinomies side by side through two different strategies: first, by declaring the issuance of a judgment or position illegitimate (outside the domain of experience and categorizability), such as the dispute over whether the world is finite or infinite; and second, by transforming non-contradiction into non-overlap and thereby denying the contradictory relation, such as in the relation between natural necessity and moral freedom. The plastic position, while inspired by Kant, seeks to criticize both strategies: both the avoidance of confronting the problem through the claim that issuing a judgment is illegitimate, and the distortion of the problem in order to get rid of contradiction. The plastic confrontation, by contrast, regards the expression of propositions (the issuing of judgments, as a human fictional narrative of the issue) as legitimate, and also acknowledges contradiction. What allows the plastic approach to simultaneously contain both sides of a contradiction (and all the intermediate moments) is not the creation of some mysterious supra-human logic that would render contradiction as

⁶¹ Malabou, C. (2005). *The future of Hegel: Plasticity, temporality and dialectic* (L. During, Trans.). Routledge. p. 186.

logical for supra-human beings. Rather, quite simply, it is the non-involvement of that particular contradiction in the main problematic, and consequently the neutralization of the seriousness of the principle of non-contradiction itself by rendering the very issue in which the contradiction arises secondary. In other words, whether the world is infinite or finite, whether it has a beginning or not, whether it even has a telos or not, none of this makes a difference for us and the issue of the meaningfulness and justification of the subject's living is indifferent with respect to these questions, and precisely for this reason a justified answer can contain both sides of the contradiction within itself. This position is reminiscent of the sayings of the Buddha, thousands of years before Kant and Hegel, in the luminous sutta of Cūḷamālukyasutta. Addressing Mālukiyaḥputta, who asks him to answer certain insoluble philosophical questions (such as the beginning and end of the world), the Buddha replies that whether the world is finite or infinite, limited or unlimited, the problem of your liberation remains exactly the same. Consequently, another aspect of the plastic confrontation with contradiction and its capacity to internalize it lies in melting the contradiction itself and deprioritizing it, not by sublating it, not by converting it into non-overlap, not through a relativistic confrontation, but precisely by plastically accepting both sides of the contradiction and reformulating them in the light (that is, through the heat) of living itself as the main problematic.

As was also noted at the beginning of the chapter, it seems that after reading the contents of this chapter, which may well be considered the heart of the present system, the audience not only fails to feel satisfied, but also becomes, to a considerable extent, confused and baffled. Naturally, when one speaks of proposing a "logic", the expectation arises that this new logic, in addition to formulating its main idea and presenting its allegories and rules, will explicitly and clearly explain what it defines as a valid argument or, for example, precisely how the plastic test of truth is to be conducted, thereby clarifying matters for

the audience. Without wishing to evade responsibility for the text, I must remind that the entirety of this book is merely an index of a system still in the process of being produced. Consequently, the discussion, especially in this chapter, remains at the level of presenting ideas, and its adequate elaboration requires further efforts that will become possible after the publication of this text and in light of the reactions and feedback of the serious, creative, and critical audience. I also acknowledge that this chapter corresponds precisely to the limits of my own capacity in proposing the idea of a plastic logic. Yet beyond these points, it should be emphasized that when something fundamentally new is proposed, it generates not only its content but also its own criteria of evaluation. As a result, it cannot simply be measured according to evaluative criteria that the text itself is in the process of transcending. The idealization of a kind of “reductionist abstractness” (formulaization), and portraying it as “clarity”, and transforming it into the principle of an apparently infallible logic, is not only itself one of the greatest “obscurantist” tricks, but more importantly, it is rooted in humanity’s evasion of responsibility from the ever-indispensable commitment to awareness, preparedness, and decisiveness. For this reason, the conventional method of logical clarity is itself, in fact, one of the targets of critique in this text. Furthermore, the audience themselves will discover that part of what they may regard as the ambiguity of the present chapter, concerning how plastic or alloy logic is to be implemented and applied, or how a system of allegories or a moral or political action is to be justified, will be resolved (or at least diminished) through reading the subsequent chapters. In this work, despite the initial division into chapters, discussions regarding logic, philosophy, morality, politics, and especially practices are not separate from one another; rather, they have taken shape and been articulated within one another and in an intertwined manner. For example, the conditions of a justified system of allegories, which presumably should have been discussed in this

chapter, have instead been developed in an intertwined manner with the epistemological discussion in the following chapter. The same interconnection exists between the chapters of Epistemology and Ontology, and so on. Therefore, I once again find it necessary to ask the serious audience of this text to remain patient and to postpone their final evaluation of the logic of this work until after reading it in its entirety and observing the manifestations and applications of this logic in the forthcoming chapters.

This version does not contain chapters 3 – 8.

Epilogue: Towards Hope

**“At the great day, only
The one who has been pricked endlessly, laugh:
Only the sun.”**

(A great day passes, Bijan Elahi, lines 14-16)

Before entering the practices appendix section, it is necessary to briefly point to the achievements of this text, both in order to make the overall picture of the system coherent and to avoid misunderstandings as much as possible. Although brief attempts were made in the introduction to explain the nihilistic situation, this text has, in fact, assumed acknowledgment of the nihilistic situation as its prerequisite. As a result, its main audience is one who has confronted, with mind, flesh, and blood, all the manifestations of nihilism (from epistemological nihilism to ontological and from moral nihilism to political) and has found no positive way out of the nihilistic situation and towards the creation of a meaningful and valuable life. It is only then that the slightest glimmer, even if unguaranteed and unclear, can be taken seriously. In a word, the point of departure of this text (both for the author and for the audience to whom it is written), is “desperation”. Grasping the presence of this desperation all over this work makes comprehension of the work possible. Otherwise, the present endeavor is not even worth a glance. I imagine that most of the probable misunderstood criticisms of this work, will be raised by the readers who are not (yet) the main audience of this work: that is, those who know what they want from life and what needs to be done, who know the epistemic and moral right

and wrong, who know what their political and economic goals are, and so on. They will probably find this work fanciful, pretentious, unbalanced (in parts too vague and in parts too lengthy and repetitive), with divergent style and tone (in parts like a scientific and theoretical text, in others like a rhetorical or poetic text, and yet elsewhere as if an epic or polemic manifesto), in regard to politics conservative, elitist, individualist, overly abstract and ultimately, irritating.

Nonetheless, we have made the meaning of life in the personal realm our main problematic, and have focused on the question of a criterion or a foundation which could make one's life valuable and meaningful (whatever it may be, from pleasure-seeking to power-seeking, from love for a beloved to commitment to children or parents, from spreading awareness to progress in science, and so on). In the next stage, this making meaningful and valuable was connected with individuals' beliefological systems of allegories, and, of course, we presented our own specific system of allegories as well which is based on the idea of "decision to fight". Only then the issue of comparison between these systems can be addressed, "criticism" becomes possible, and we emerge out of our initial individualistic relativism. In such manner, we proposed a mechanism for distinguishing between justified and unjustified systems of allegories; though a mechanism that is itself justifiable, meaning that it does not stagnate in dogmatism and one-sidedness. And finally, we pointed out the practical consequences of a justified system of allegories in the domain of morality and politics. This was a brief general outline of this work, of which we will provide a more detailed summary in what follows. Having said that, we should also note that, as mentioned before, the present book is not a complete work, but rather only the first edition of the first volume of a preliminary index for a comprehensive plan, each chapter of which could potentially, in a sense, be expanded and elaborated — though not necessarily by me — in the form of an independent work.

This work was thus begun with the acknowledgment of nihilism and the meaninglessness of life and the absence of a justified criterion of value. In this situation, the only anchor or point of entry that it was able to find to commence its movement was that in the time of absolute dominance of nihilism and meaninglessness, the only justified and meaningful action is the very fighting “via/against/inside” this situation. This idea, which also serves as the title of the work, proceeded through an extended and challenging path to demonstrate — via diverse topics, from logic, epistemology, and ontology to teleology, axiology, religion, morality, and politics — how this “fighting” can be explained in a justified manner. Presumably, the reader sees such a title on the face of a book and expects martial or political techniques on how to fight the enemy. Such a reader will, after seeing all these diverse and scattered topics, probably become frustrated and disappointed. But when the enemy is in me, when I myself am the product of the same situation I wish to change, where even my very will to change is the product of the same situation, how can one talk of fighting? Here the techniques are different so that at first it may seem that the target is me myself rather than the external enemy. This probable disappointment reaches its zenith after reading the chapters of morality and political subject: The audience probably expects from reading a philosophy of morality to acquire principles that would enable one to easily distinguish vice from virtue, and from a chapter on politics, to present an ideal or effective political system and the means to fight the enemy and to change the existing political system towards the desired one. Although such a warning was given to the audience many, many times throughout the text, this disappointment is unavoidable. The reason is that, firstly, the history of proposed moral and political systems has ruined the audience’s expectation, and secondly, if an audience feels this disappointment after reading this text, they probably had not yet fully understood and acknowledged nihilism when they began reading this

text. Therefore, this disappointment and even more intense disappointments, are the product of the audience's more indirect and delayed confrontation with nihilism itself and the desperation evoked by it — that is, instead of starting this text while already carrying hopelessness and desperation, the audience might come to experience them over the course of reading the text. The audience, of course, has the right to avoid such disappointment and might even mock or insult this text and its author and try to look for ways out of this disappointment and desperation. In my opinion, however, this disappointment itself is the precondition for entering the depths of the system presented in this book, and it was supposed to accompany the author and the audience in all the stages of the system, even to the last pages. Perhaps it is only now that the meaning of such frequently repeated terms as “desperation” or “dominance of nihilism” can be fully understood by the audience.

However, on the contrary, by accepting this desperation and disappointment, this work's claim is that it has been able to show or even create a glimmer. Where all epistemic, biologic, and moral criteria have collapsed, this system attempted to offer another criterion, from another source, and towards this, despite acknowledging and even utilizing all the criticisms against subjectivist individualism, it placed its anchor in the subject (of course in the critical sense that was mentioned). Every fight is essentially a fight of the subject. However, in order not to fall into the failed experience of modern subjectivism, that is, to avoid falling into Don Quixotesque dogmatism or epistemic solipsism or individualistic hedonism and so forth, it had to create the first draft of a novel kind of logic that is plastic in one sense and alloyed in another. Furthermore, while acknowledging the collapse of any form of criterion, this work attempted to provide indicators for justification. Here, it had to propose a general outline, titled “theory of systems of allegories”, to include all the existing conceptual, practical, and biological approaches and systems

(even itself) in it, so that it could present and use these justification indicators for all systems of allegories. A justification whose main goal is to not fall into either single-voiced dogmatism or cacophonous relativism, both of which block critical, meaningful, and justified dialogue.

After presenting the theory of systems of allegories, this work itself entered a new level of discussion and positioned itself in one of the rooms of the mansion that it had designed and it presented its own specific theory of the system of allegories, both theoretically and practically. At the theoretical level, in the chapters on epistemology and ontology, without relying on any axiom and merely by creating some presumed postulates, and indeed by relying on the very “decision to fight” itself, while demonstrating the internal obstruction of any form of “cognition” and criticism of any form of guaranteed reliance on it, by rising above Hegelian dialectics, the text arrived at a kind of plastic dynamic idealist ontology. With regard to epistemology, setting “experience” as the criterion, it attempted to start, in a different manner, from sense and feeling, and with their aid, come to the triple concepts of mind, body, and emotion. But as the audience will probably complain, this initial discussion did not lead to a comprehensive system of allegories of epistemology. We presented this epistemology only as an entry into our new interpretation of “awareness”. Indeed, considering our claim regarding the essential obstruction of cognition and its unreliability and acknowledgment of epistemological nihilism, the epistemology chapter has actually acted against any form of conventional epistemology system. Therefore, we postponed its discussion to the beliefology chapter, where, through the examination of two super-systems of allegories, i.e., religion and science, we presented our own idea regarding the justification of a belief system.

Though at the practical level too, before entering the realm of morality and politics, we had to design a teleological system so that with its help we could

restore the dignity of the misappropriated concept of “value”, and then we were able to, with the help of a distinction between “telos” and “direction”, offer a kind of axiology that could survive postmodern criticisms against any form of evaluation. It was with the help of this teleological and axiological system that it became possible to reformulate a kind of moral and political philosophy, though it had to differ from conventional moral philosophies (providing specific procedures to clearly distinguish vice from virtue at the moment of action) and conventional political philosophies (providing the ideal political system and specifying the steps to achieve it).

However, this system, contrary to the simplistic labels that it will probably receive initially, is not only not incompatible with political action and presentation of ideal system, but it could actually justify both action and presentation of positive political system based on its principles. The issue here is that an ideal political system is always the product of collective wisdom and imagination of living subjects, and the level of presentation of it is different from the level of presentation of the idea of justified political act of the subject. Instead, by proposing the three elements of awareness, preparedness, and decisiveness, this system attempted to provide a degree of meaningful living and valuable justified action, so that the wandering helpless subject can make their living meaningful with its help. It is only after that that the subject can, in a defensible and justified manner, enter any form of strategic collaboration with existing political activities or even create new alternatives for political action and ideals. The significant issue here is that of the entirety of activities towards freedom and justice (in all the liberalist and socialist interpretations and their existing derivations and alternatives), none can make life meaningful and justify fighting. Instead, it is the meaningfulness and justified value of the living of the fighting subject that can make political activity valuable.

Here a criticism may be posed: How can one grant such centrality to “awareness”, despite having criticized any form of cognition? How can one assign such a position to “decisiveness”, despite having criticized any form of decisive practical rule? This question has indeed received its answer in the text itself, but here and as a brief epilogue with the aim of minimizing misreading, misunderstanding, and misappropriation, we must mention that the awareness of which this system speaks is fundamentally different from cognition or episteme in the conventional sense. As discussed in the epistemology chapter, common sensically, an episteme is a manner for the cognition of an issue (be it human, God, or the world) and offers ways to defend this manner. Yet today, this conception of episteme has been dissolved by the acid of nihilism. The awareness that we suggest is, however, a kind of attentiveness to the states and sentiments of the subject (which all other issues, including human and the world, fall under: that is, observing the necessity of things and also penetrating into the depths of things by mediation of the depths of the subject). In this sense, awareness, though also includes this always-uncertain epistemic-imaginative understanding, is not a type of “knowledge”, but rather a kind of continuous aware attention to the subjective experience (in all its dimensions, which extends even to the objective and intersubjective realms as well) and nothing more. Furthermore, a section was dedicated to the justification of decisiveness despite undecidability, to show how one can, despite absolute undecidability and ever-increasing hesitation, perform an action decisively and afterward, without falling into the sickly mental habit of “remorse”, take absolute responsibility for the necessity of the action.

It was demonstrated, however, that mere awareness is not enough to realize this decisiveness, and the subject needs to have cultivated a kind of “preparedness” for accepting responsibility and paying its price. Though this triad (awareness, preparedness, and decisiveness) is not possible with such

weak, wretched, helpless subjects. Therefore, comprehensive techniques have been designed to empower and prepare the subject for accepting such a momentous task (which God, nature, and even humans have sidestepped, and nihilism is the result of this sidestepping). The author hopes he can one day publish these practices as one of the volumes of the present system in a sort of “The Comprehensive System of Practices”. But for now, in the appendix section of this index-like work, which will appear immediately after these lines, a brief outline of the main topics of the practices, along with concise instructions and their corresponding allegories, is presented: at the introductory level and in two categories of awareness and preparedness practices.

Finally, regarding the achievements of this system, we should avoid delusional and exaggerated grandiosity and self-importance, as well as self-deprecation stemming from inferiority and weakness of character. The truth is that, upon falling into crisis and in utter confrontation with his own helplessness and desperation, the author first tried to find/create an answer to his “personal” problematic. It was only after this that he attempted to, without falling into delusions or false expectations, develop his personal answer and project it to the public domain, with the hope that at least one other subject would relate to this answer, whence an intersubjective co-problematic realm (which is simultaneously critical and empathetic) for creating answers and other alternatives could perhaps ensue. The rest of the story is neither up to the author nor is it in his power, but depends on the forces of the world and the necessity of relations and activities of the subjects. In this sense, the incentive for the publication of this work is a call that seeks to summon the imagination of its co-problematic audience.

In a word, recalling the allegory of “apple-eating worms”, we are creatures who know neither where they have come from, nor where they are going, nor even where they are. We do not know to what degree that which we

imagine as our experiencing of the world is common and collective and to what degree it is individual, to what degree it is caused by our cognitive system and to what degree by the world, and even further, how much truly separated we are from the so-called outside world. For this very reason, despite the presented outline of epistemological issues, our anchor, that is, the value of our living, is not placed on knowledge (always incomplete and imperfect and essentially contradictory as our knowledge is), but instead on the creation of the possibility of living meaningfully. Here, the subject is the main key. Subjects, in confrontation with their living (not merely their world), forge the possibility of the creation of meaningful experience. So far, the outline of our system of thought is inevitably solipsistic and individualistic. This is because, contrary to many solutions, we attempted not to delegate meaningfulness and valuableness of the subject's living to an unarriving tomorrow, an ideal society, an illusory nowhere, or the advent of an imaginary savior, in order to avoid resorting to any excuses that would postpone the confrontation with the main issue to the realization of utopia and sidestep the burden of responsibility, instead, the subject is to make the life they're living now meaningful. However, to explain this point, we had to problematize the "now" itself, which in turn led to a novel interpretation of time, which we named "pliant time"⁶². But that's not the whole story. We made use of three ideas in order not to stagnate at this individualistic level. Firstly, with the help of the presented alloyed and plastic logics, we demonstrated that it is possible to simultaneously internalize contradiction and presume the correctness of two contradictory answers to a question, on the condition that the question itself can be made more inclusive. In other words, we have provided an outline of meaning-giving in which, whether the whole

⁶² This term is coined by the author and explained in the book, in a critical confrontation with three conceptions of time: linear, circular, and spiral. The original Persian-Arabic term is *tavaroxi*, the adjective form of *tavarox* "to become pliant" which also evokes *tarix* "history", so much so that a more precise representation of the original term would be historical-pliant time. —Trans. note.

world is in the mind of the individual subject (that is, if it is the case that not only the outside world, but more importantly, all other human beings are, for instance, the illusions of an individual subject), or objects (in any form, and placed on any spectrum with any coordinate axis) exist outside the subject, the meaningfulness and axiological anchor of fighting would not be undermined. Secondly, the subject's need for the other was proved, not merely based on the traditional claim of need due to survival and satisfaction of desire, but instead for the telos of the third level of meaningfulness, that is, on the one hand, through the value of the synergistic power of collective imagination, and on the other, the necessity of the presence of the other (whether internal or external) to avoid any dogmatization of the system of allegories (of course in a plastic manner, and again regardless of whether this other or collective is in the subject's mind or is independent of it). Thirdly, in order for this necessary initial individualism in the objective realm (by all the alternative narratives in different spectrums of the coordinate axes) not to end up with dogmatism or solipsism, the idea of "justifying" a system of allegories is presented precisely with the aim of negating the self-enclosure of the system of allegories of the subject, as well as making it open to the expanding alternative possibilities (from both the "internal other" and the "external other"), and formulated its characteristics and stages.

If the question is posed that why in this work, which claims such comprehensiveness and holism, no discussion is found about the concrete issues of gender, ethnicity, differences of languages, geography, and other effective identificational issues of this kind, we will answer that it is simply because such discussions, like their similar discussions in economics and politics (focusing on political systems or different economic systems), have no place at all at this level of problem statement. Of course, the examination and analysis of these factors is quite important, but compared to the problematic of

this work, it retains a secondary priority. Because this work, instead, tries to show how a subject can (or at least has the possibility to) always and everywhere live and realize a meaningful and justified life. Indeed to achieve this, in the first step the subject should be able to turn themselves into a fighting subject, and in the principles that give meaning to their life, remove the focus from factors such as ethnicity, language, political system, economic system, gender, and the like, in a critical manner and of course with difficulty, and rearrange them under the main issue. Nihilism has already destroyed all these refuges. Subjects know that their meaningful living is not dependent or conditioned on any particular or chosen nation, any particular or chosen language, any particular political system, any particular economic system, any particular gender, and so on. It is only then that they can, with the awareness and preparedness they are equipped with, deal with the concrete issues of contradictions and possibilities of their ethnicity, race, culture, and language, and even problematize both the ways out of an established political or economic system and even the establishment of an ideal political or economic system. In fact, the issue of “the meaning of life”, while focusing on the subjectivity of the subject (before and beyond their religion, ethnicity, language, etc.), is not about the modern idea of an abstract and imaginary human being without ethnicity, language, gender, and color; it is rather about the only possibility of freedom and the only possibility of the subject becoming subject as a thread stringing together all the different material, identity-related, and historical conditions. As a result, it acts like an anchor or lifeline through which the subjects can pull themselves out of stagnation in the swamp caused by prioritizing second-rate issues, and indeed through this perspective, return to those issues again and even provide creative, committed, and fair solutions for those who have not chosen radical fighting and are stuck in that swamp to enable them surmount their issues. Accusing such fighting subject of political passivity or disregard for ethnicity-gender

issues and the like is, however, the easiest way to avoid confrontation with the core problem and distort the meaning of fighting. And, of course, it is the best excuse for stagnating and fumbling endlessly and in vain in these plural swamps.

It is only here, after such effort, that we can talk of “hope”. The issue here is not the fulfillment of people’s wishes, but precisely the “possibility of hope” itself. Although in this system from the beginning it was as if a kind of hopefulness pushed the fight forward, but as was acknowledged before, this fight is a fight at the height of hopelessness. And what power it takes to fight at the same time that we acknowledge such degree of hopelessness, desperation, and bewilderment! Only now, after the publication of this work which sought to summon the audience’s imagination, can we talk about the possibility of hope, as the outcome of confronting a comprehensive theoretical and practical system of allegories, criticizing it and recognizing, extracting, and awakening its possibilities. Hope for the creation of new possibilities which make the very living of the subjects meaningful, in the fleeting opportunity of the now which is as long as eternity: That is, at the moment when, despite having lost one’s head, one might be able to make yet another move⁶³.

⁶³ As *Hagakure, The Book of the Samurai* puts it: “Even if one’s head were to be suddenly cut off, he should be able to do one more action with certainty.” —Trans. note.